

**Quality of Living: Dublin in the
International Context**
**Summary of Mercer Benchmarking Report and
Report of Workshop, May 2010**
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This report is part of the Dublin City Indicators project that encourages an evidence-based approach to developing policy in the city while also highlighting the key role of Dublin in the national and international context.

The Office of International Relations and Research is responsible for the development of indicators that monitor and benchmark Dublin's performance. The Office also develops and commissions research that yields a better understanding of the key strategic areas that influence future city success.

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Quality of Living: Dublin in the International Context Summary of a Mercer Benchmarking Report and Workshop

As part of its City Indicators and international benchmarking project, the Office of International Relations and Research at Dublin City Council monitors a number of city ranking reports and indexes. The Mercer Quality of Living annual survey ranks hundreds of cities worldwide and is aimed at multi-national companies and government agencies in the calculation of remuneration and compensation packages for expatriate employees.

In the context of increased mobility among firms and employees and competition among cities to attract mobile workforces, the Office of International Relations and Research commissioned Mercer to deliver a report that assesses quality of living in Dublin against that of other high-ranking cities in the Mercer Quality of Living Index (go to <http://www.mercer.com/qualityofliving> or see Appendix 1 for overall listing 2009 and 2010).

In the report, Mercer addresses strengths and weaknesses for Dublin, and provides some recommendations for future development to improve quality of living and attractiveness of Dublin for international firms and mobile workers.

During May 2010, the Office of International Relations and Research hosted a workshop to discuss the implications of Dublin's position in the Mercer Quality of Living ranking and the comparison with other cities.

Slagin Parakatil, Senior Researcher at Mercer, presented the findings of the Dublin focused report to a group, including representatives of Dublin City Council, business and academia. The presentation included a description of the aims and outcomes of the Dublin study as well as an overview of Mercer's approach to the international Quality of Living ranking.

The ensuing questions and discussion yielded clarification on aspects of the research methodology and some suggestions for action to improve Dublin's position in further Mercer reports.

Peter Finnegan, Director of the Office of International Relations and Research, facilitated the discussion and clarified that the presentation and a report of the workshop and its outcomes would be forwarded to all participants in due course.

This report summarises the key findings of the research. Any comments or queries raised during the workshop are included at the relevant point in the summary of the report.

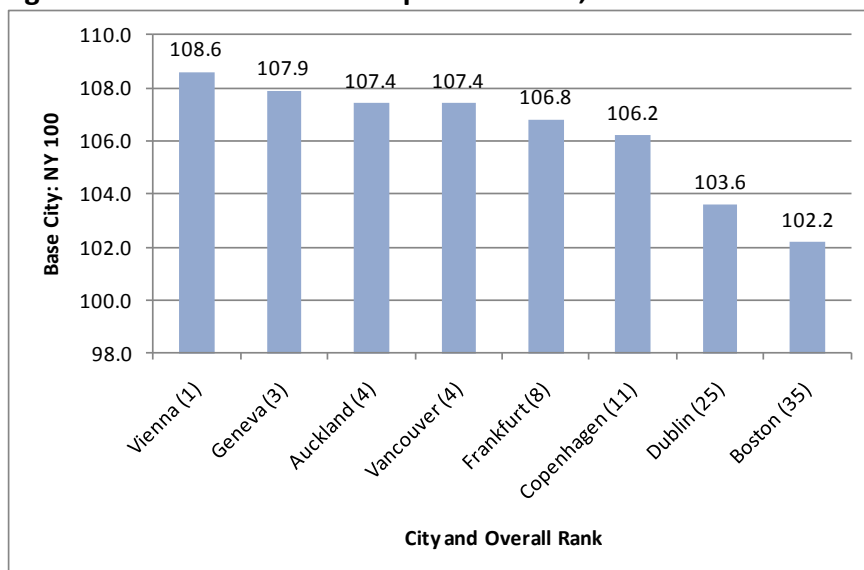
Dublin and its comparator cities

The seven cities spanning three continents were selected as useful cities for comparison with Dublin:

- Have international city status
- Have a high expatriate presence
- Contain regional headquarters of international organizations and multinational companies
- Are well-known travel, business or cultural hubs
- Six of the seven cities ranked in the Mercer Quality of Living Index top 15 in 2009; one city ranked 35th, ten places below Dublin
- Include cities that excel in at least one of the Quality of Living categories

Figure 1 shows the cities chosen for the Dublin benchmarking exercise along with the overall rank and score for each city. The scores for each city are presented in an index format with the base city at 100, allowing for ease of comparison. Mercer use New York City, at 100, as the base city throughout reports and press releases.

Figure 1 Dublin and comparator cities, Rank and Score Mercer QOL Index 2009



Source: Mercer (2010)

- Participants at the workshop were curious about the **range or spread of scores** and whether the difference between, for example, 108.6 (Vienna) and 103.6 (Dublin) was significant. Mercer confirmed that Dublin achieves high scores across the range of criteria and is placed sufficiently high in the rankings to have no hardship allowance associated with a placement here. In addition, the higher the score, the more difficult it is to improve or move up the index. In fact, the extra mileage from 103 to 108 would, in many ways, be more difficult to attain than the jump from, perhaps, a low score of 40 to a higher score of 70 or 80 on the index.

- Further queries were made regarding **Dublin’s position in previous rankings** and the regularity of the published reports. Table 1 below outlines Dublin’s position in the annual ranking since 2005. The results for 2010 were published in May 2010, subsequent to the workshop hosted by Dublin City Council.

Table 1 Dublin’s position in Mercer Quality of Living Global City Rankings, 2005 - 2010

Year	World Ranking	European Ranking	Index
2005	22	N/A	102.5
2006	24	15	103.8
2007	27	17	103.3
2008	25	16	103.5
2009	25	15	103.6
2010	26	17	N/A

Source: Mercer, 2010

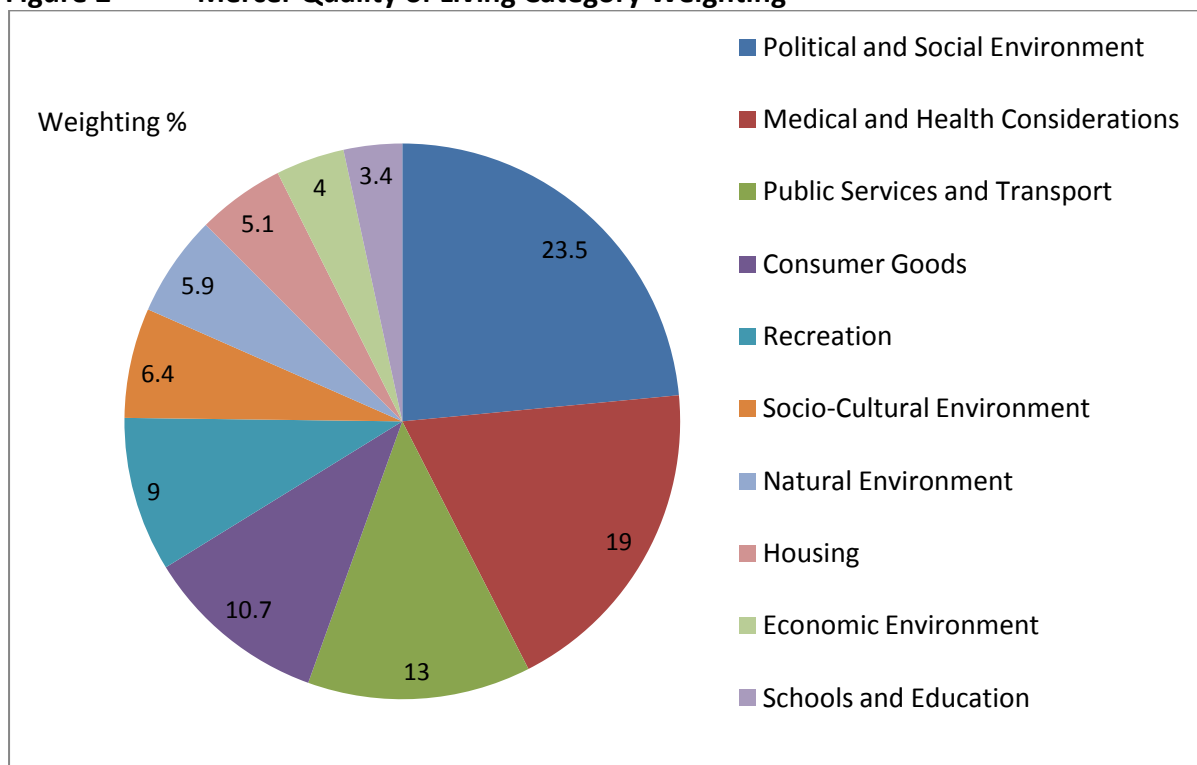
- Several workshop attendees were interested to hear if Mercer researchers **backed up** the results of the rankings with more **qualitative research** with expatriate workers and their families. Mercer does not conduct follow-up interviews or focus groups with expatriate employees or their families. It is felt that there would be too strong an incentive for employees to exaggerate poor quality of living conditions in certain cities in order to increase the hardship allowance or other financial incentives to locate there.
- Two further resources for additional exploration of the quality of living for expatriates in Dublin were suggested by workshop participants. A group comprising the **HR Directors** of large international firms should be invited to offer their views on the pull factors associated with Dublin and the areas which made Dublin a *‘hard sell’* to employees located elsewhere. Secondly, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) may have feedback from **Irish Diplomats and their families** regarding their experiences in cities across the world. The DFA may be willing to share this information or to provide DCC with access to a number of Diplomats and their families to gain comparative city living insight. Both of these avenues could prove to be rich sources of qualitative information on how quality of life in Dublin is viewed by a certain category of workers and their families, with some comparison to other global cities.

Breaking down and comparing Dublin's performance

What follows is a summary of Dublin's performance under each category, compared with the other cities in the study. The categories are further broken down by specific criteria. Dublin's specific score on each of the criteria and the key strengths and weaknesses as identified by Mercer are also detailed here. Where the category was discussed during the workshop, the comments and suggestions are included.

Mercer compiles the annual Quality of Living ranking on the basis of 39 factors contained within 10 separate categories, each assigned a weighting. The categories and weighting are designed in collaboration with Mercer professionals located around the world, multinationals, international organisations, governmental institutions and other experts. Figure 2 below gives a breakdown of the ten categories and the importance allocated to each one.

Figure 2 Mercer Quality of Living Category Weighting



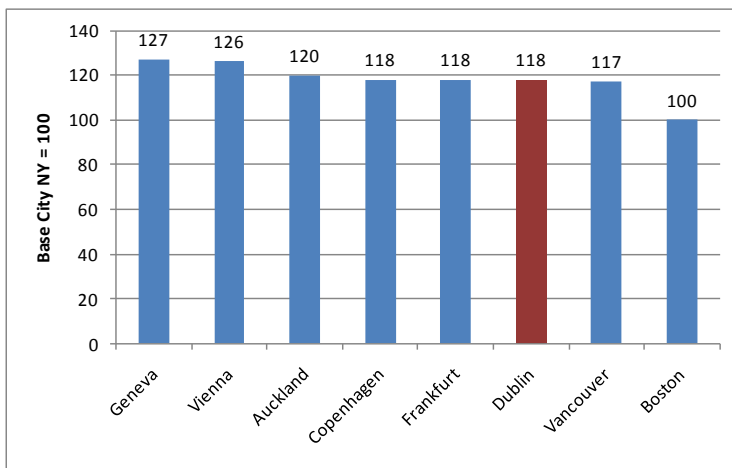
Source: Mercer, 2010

- There was interest in the **age profile** of the expatriate workers who generally make up the object of Mercer's recommendations on remuneration packages according to city location. Mercer explained that a good score in any of the criteria should be transferable across age groups and profiles. For example, the presence of international schools indicates a certain standard of infrastructure which will have relevance for anybody living in a particular city, regardless of whether they have

children of school-going age. However, the ranking is generally aimed at the average expatriate worker of more than 35 years of age.

- The cost of posting workers to various cities is a key factor in whether or how many workers to send. **Dublin** tends to be an **expensive posting** due to the cost of housing, health services and insurance and the cost of living more generally.
- A contributor felt that something which was not captured in the ranking is that Dublin is a generally **welcoming city** and that this adds to the overall quality of life for residents, particularly those from outside of Ireland.

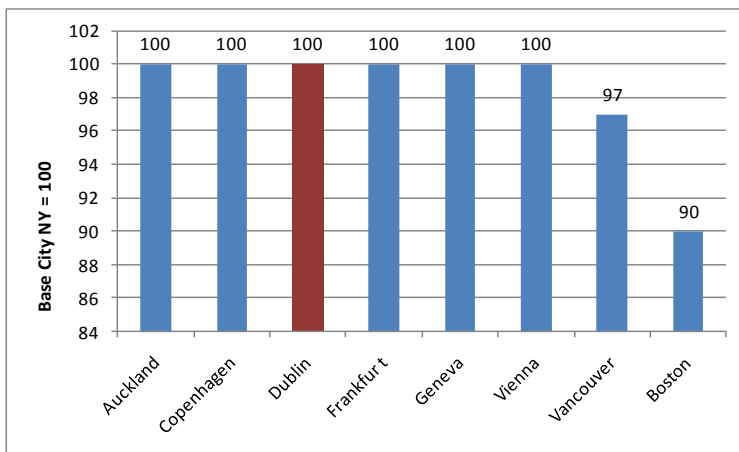
Political and Social Environment



Criteria	Dublin Score
Relationship with other countries	10
Internal Stability	8
Crime	9
Law enforcement	9
Ease of entry and exit	8

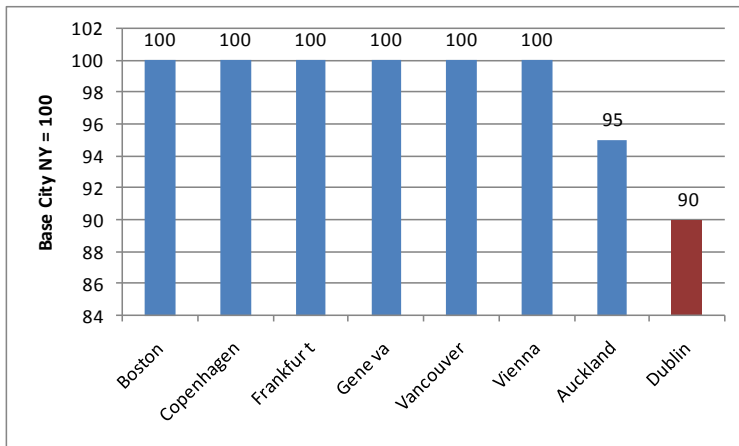
Key Strengths	Key Weaknesses
High police presence	Functioning of government
Relatively low level of crime	Level of perceived corruption
Openness of country to foreigners	Rule of law

Economic Environment



Criteria	Dublin Score
Currency exchange regulations	10
Banking services	10

Socio-Cultural Environment



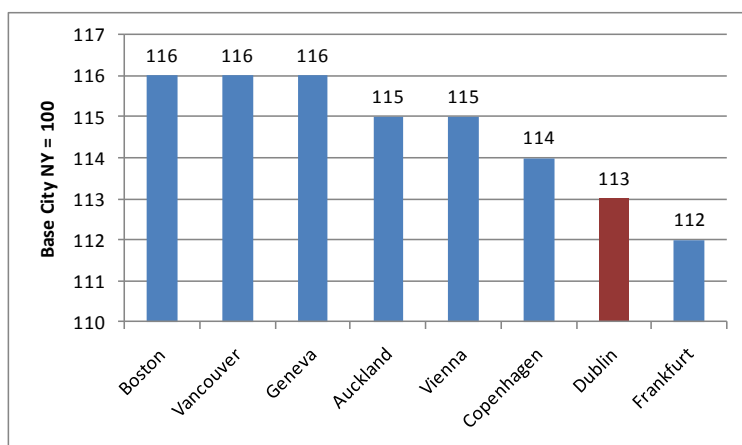
Criteria	Dublin Score
Limitations on personal freedom	10
Media and censorship	8

Key Strengths	Key Weaknesses
High score in Digital Access Index for Affordability; Infrastructure; Knowledge	Low score in Digital Access Index for Quality; Usage

- The issue of **broadband** availability and quality was discussed at length at the workshop. Some participants felt the speed and reliability of broadband in the city was poor. It was agreed that domestic broad band was an issue both in terms of social connection and the need for high end workers to have a good connection at home.

The issue of Wi-Fi in the city was raised, in particular participants were interested in how other cities such as Geneva or Barcelona could provide free Wi-Fi throughout the city.

Medical and Health Considerations

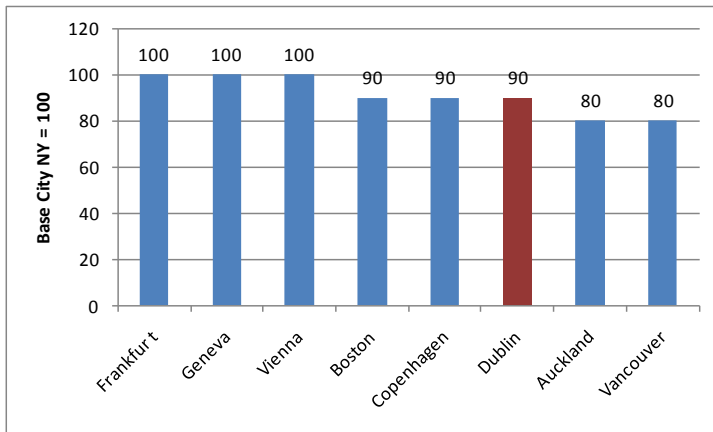


Criteria	Dublin Score
Hospital services	9
Medical supplies	10
Infectious diseases	10
Water potability	10
Waste removal	8
Sewage	9
Air pollution	9
Troublesome and destructive animals and insects	10

Key Strengths	Key Weaknesses
Hospital services of a high standard	Low number of hospital beds per 10,000 of the population
Relatively low levels of air pollution	Relatively low overall ranking in Environmental Performance Index
	Standard of waste removal
	Standard of waste water management

- The weighting attached to Mercer’s Medical and Health Considerations is the second highest of all the criteria. Of the eight cities in the study, Dublin is ranked seventh in this category, which includes the standard of care in public and private hospitals and the range of medical supplies as well as public health issues such as sewage services and waste removal, water and air quality and the presence of infectious diseases and troublesome animals and insects. Although Dublin’s overall score is not low, the areas in which it falls down are the **number of hospital beds; waste removal; waste water management**. Participants felt that issues such as **waiting times in A&E, the cost of health care and the low number of hospital beds per head of population** in Ireland generally were areas demanding increased attention and improvement.

Schools and Education

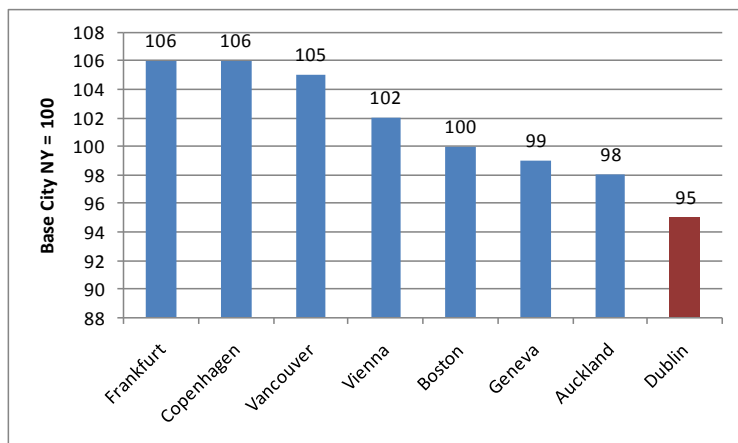


Criteria	Dublin Score
Schools	9

Key Strengths	Key Weaknesses
Good reputation of institutes of higher education	Low enrolment in higher education
High school enrolment	Low spending on education
	Low number of international schools

- The Mercer Quality of Living ranking considers the provision of international education in the cities surveyed. The category of employees central to Mercer's work are often more interested in international schools than local schools as they will either return home or move elsewhere within a relatively short, defined period of time. An international curriculum means their children can move schools easily without too much disruption to their education. The low number of **International Schools and schools offering the International Baccalaureate Programme** may be off-putting to expatriate workers and their families.

Public Services and Transport

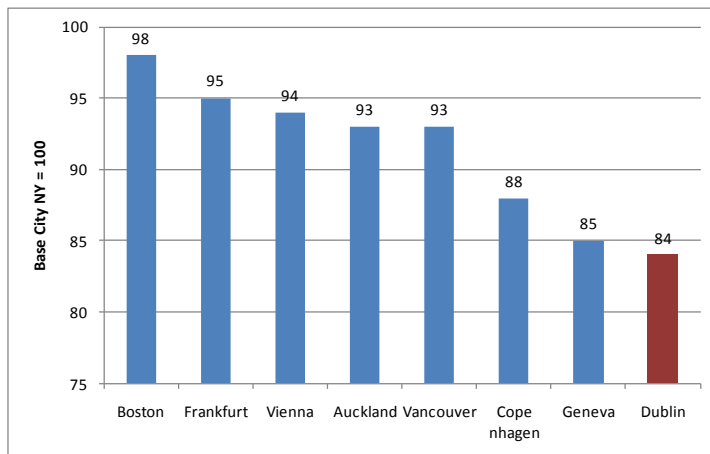


Criteria	Dublin Score
Electricity	10
Water availability	10
Telephone	10
Mail	9
Public transport	8
Traffic congestion	5
Airport	6

Key Strengths	Key Weaknesses
Reasonable distance and travel time from airport to city centre	Small number of airlines operating from the airport
	Low quality of air transport infrastructure
	High level of traffic congestion
	Low quality of overall public transport infrastructure

- Dublin was placed last of the peer cities under review in terms of Public Services and Transport, including **air transport infrastructure**. The report found that only 30 airlines serve Dublin airport compared with 139 serving Frankfurt. The capacity of Dublin airport to meet the necessary levels of connectivity by air was discussed. The argument was put forward in favour of a second Dublin airport rather than expanding the existing airport and putting further strain on the roads and other infrastructure currently servicing it.
- Mercer referred to the need for Dublin to improve its **public transport infrastructure** and to address the levels of congestion which were found to be high by international comparison. Workshop participants referred to the improvements made to the public transport system in Dublin in the last number of years, including Quality Bus Corridors and the introduction of the LUAS. In addition there was reference to planned improvements to existing services such as new bus routes, smart ticket and integrated ticketing as well as the commencement of Metro North. There was agreement that the upgrading and expansion of public transport should continue as a matter of urgency.

Recreation

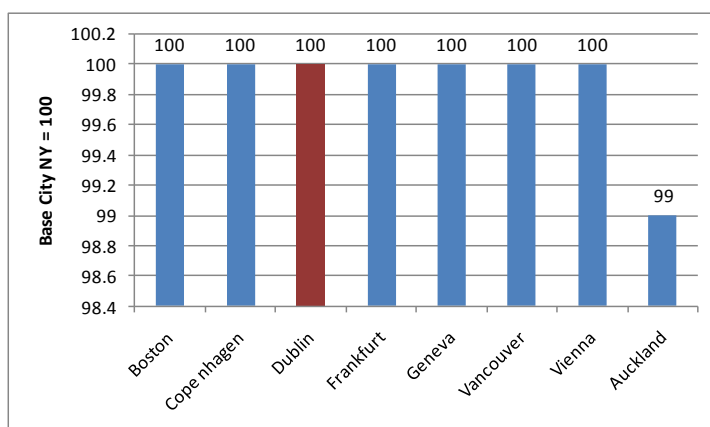


Criteria	Dublin Score
Variety of restaurants	9
Theatrical and musical performances	8
Cinemas	9
Sport and leisure activities	8

Key Strengths	Key Weaknesses
Good variety of restaurants	Low number of international concerts and theatrical performances
Good availability of outdoor activities	

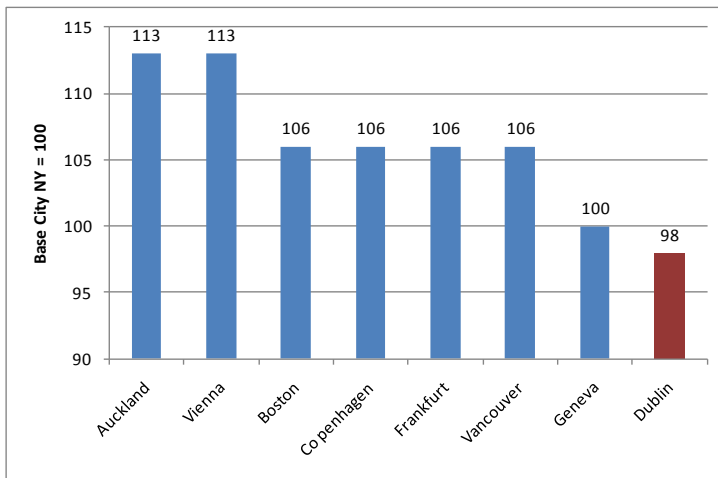
- There was a generally surprised reaction to the **relatively low marking for Recreation**. It was explained that this probably relates to the detail of the criteria – the Recreation score is based on the availability of international performances and national and local ones would not be taken into account. Other participants felt that the opening of the new Convention Centre, the new stadium at Lansdowne Road and the new theatre on the Grand Canal Dock would enhance Dublin’s ranking in the future.

Consumer Goods



Key Strengths	Key Weaknesses
Good availability of food items	Price of goods could become an issue
Reasonable food prices	

Housing

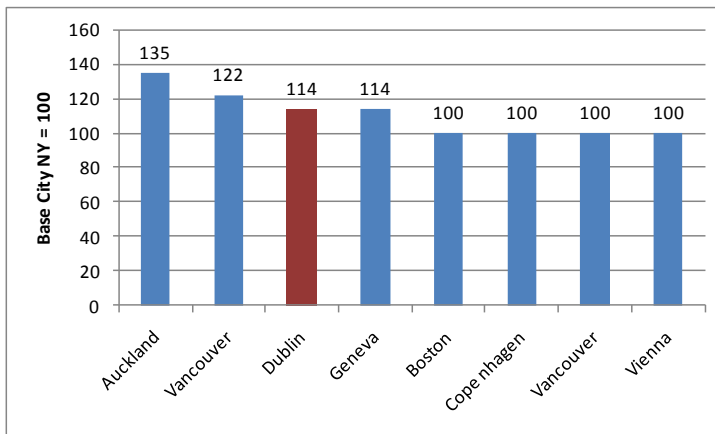


Criteria	Dublin Score
Housing	8
Household appliances and furniture	10
Household maintenance and repair	9

Key Strengths	Key Weaknesses
Good availability of quality household appliances and furniture	Relatively low availability of both furnished and unfurnished high-quality apartments for expatriates in the city centre
Good availability and quality of household maintenance and repair services	

- The **Housing** category considers the choice and availability of high-standard housing, the variety and quality of household appliances and the quality of household maintenance and repair. Dublin received the lowest score of the eight cities under this category. Participants at the workshop were surprised at Dublin's relatively low score under availability of high quality housing, furnished and unfurnished, in areas likely to be preferred by expatriates.

Natural Environment



Criteria	Dublin Score
Climate	7
Record of natural disasters	10

Key Strengths	Key Weaknesses
Extreme temperatures are rare	Relatively high rainfall
No major natural disasters	Flash flooding has occurred in recent years

Appendix 1 Mercer Quality of Living Index, 2009 and 2010

2010 Rank	2009 Rank	City	Country
1	1	Vienna	Austria
2	2	Zurich	Switzerland
3	3	Geneva	Switzerland
4	4	Vancouver	Canada
4	4	Auckland	New Zealand
6	6	Düsseldorf	Germany
7	7	Munich	Germany
7	8	Frankfurt	Germany
9	9	Bern	Switzerland
10	10	Sydney	Australia
11	11	Copenhagen	Denmark
12	12	Wellington	New Zealand
13	13	Amsterdam	Netherlands
15	14	Brussels	Belgium
16	15	Toronto	Canada
14	16	Ottawa	Canada
17	16	Berlin	Germany
18	18	Melbourne	Australia
19	19	Luxembourg	Luxembourg
20	20	Stockholm	Sweden
21	21	Perth	Australia
21	22	Montreal	Canada
24	23	Nürnberg	Germany
24	24	Oslo	Norway
26	25	Dublin	Ireland
28	26	Calgary	Canada
28	26	Singapore	Singapore
23	28	Hamburg	Germany
31	29	Honolulu	USA
35	30	Helsinki	Finland
32	30	San Francisco	USA
32	30	Adelaide	Australia
34	33	Paris	France
36	34	Brisbane	Australia
37	35	Boston	USA
40	35	Tokyo	Japan
38	37	Lyon	France
39	38	London	UK
41	38	Yokohama	Japan
41	40	Kobe	Japan
41	41	Milan	Italy
/	42	Portland	USA

2010 Rank	2009 Rank	City	Country
44	42	Barcelona	Spain
45	44	Lisbon	Portugal
45	44	Chicago	USA
/	44	Osaka	Japan
45	44	Washington DC	USA
48	48	Madrid	Spain
49	49	New York City	USA
50	50	Seattle	USA