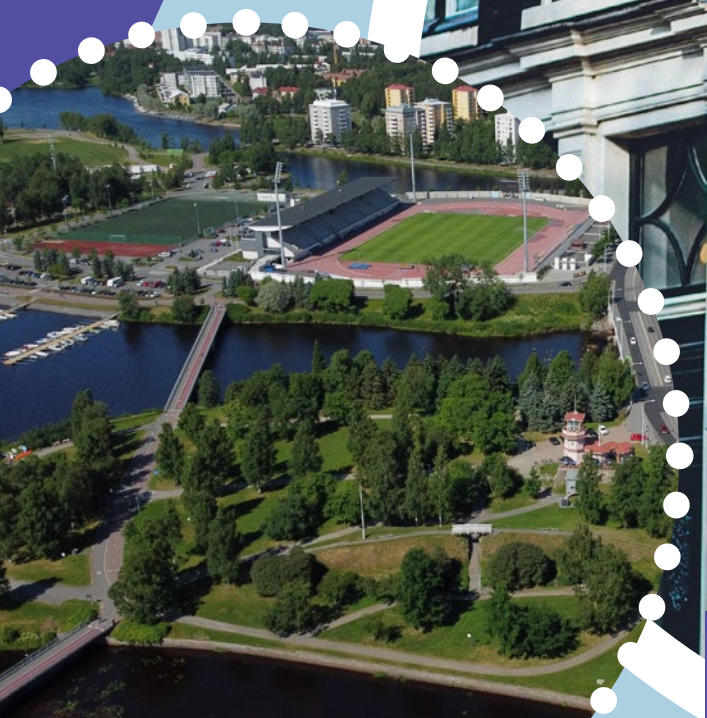




European  
Commission

# REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN EUROPEAN CITIES, 2023



Regional and  
Urban Policy



# **Report on the quality of life in European cities, 2023**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The current report, based on the results of the 2023 survey, builds on and updates the one published in 2020. It was prepared by Laura de Dominicis (DG Regional and Urban Policy, B.1), Francesco Berlingieri, Béatrice d'Hombres, Chiara Gentile, Caterina Mauri and Elena Stepanova (Joint Research Centre S3), and Nicola Pontarollo (University of Brescia, Italy). The maps were produced by Hugo Poelman and Olivier Draily (DG Regional and Urban Policy, B.1). The interactive tools were prepared by Linde Ackermans (DG Regional and Urban Policy, B.1). The authors would like to thank Otilia Ciobanu and Miguel Hernandez-Littlewood (DG Regional and Urban Policy, O3) for providing help in selecting the European Union cohesion policy projects illustrated in the boxes.

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The opinions expressed are those of the authors only and should not be considered as representative of the European Commission's official position.

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## FOREWORD

It has been said that quality is never an accident – it depends on intelligent effort. This is doubly true of quality of life, which depends crucially on the amenities and opportunities in the place where we live. Amenity and opportunity do not happen by chance – intelligent effort by Europe's cities is key. And European Cohesion Policy supports them, as part of our mission to ensure that no place is left behind.

So it is encouraging to read that quality of life in European cities remains high: almost nine out of ten people report satisfaction with living in their city. And satisfaction in eastern EU cities continues to catch up with the average. However, there is still work to be done. There has been some decline in satisfaction in western EU cities. And there is still a North/South gap, with the lowest satisfaction being reported in the South – and especially in non-EU survey cities.

You will find such figures – and a wealth of other data – in this excellent report. Policymakers will find practical insights, citizens will find useful information.

I myself draw 3 key lessons. First, that opportunities matter. Especially high-quality job opportunities, which are a key determinant of satisfaction. I take this as a timely reminder: we must ensure that all Europeans can access such opportunities – wherever they happen to live.

The second lesson, is that public services and public administration matter. Notably, mobility and congestion – satisfaction with public transport is another key determinant of satisfaction with your city. But public administration plays many other roles in life satisfaction: from town planning, to public services such as hospitals, schools and other amenities. This is why Cohesion Policy supports cities as they invest in all these sectors – as well as helping public authorities build their capacity to plan, and deliver, projects.

The third lesson, is that quality of life is higher in small and medium-sized cities. They feel safer, cleaner, and less noisy. They are seen as better places to live, at every point in the lifecycle – from families bringing up young children, to those growing old.

And all these lessons have important policy implications. No one benefits when jobs, especially high-quality jobs, concentrate in just a few cities. We all benefit from a more level playing field – a more even spread of economic activity. More opportunities in small and medium-size cities, and their surrounding areas. And reducing the high congestion and housing costs in large cities.

These, along with many other valuable lessons, can be found throughout this report. I strongly encourage policy makers at every level to read it and benefit from it.



**Elisa Ferreira**

European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms



# Contents

List of cities in the survey, by country .....	9
Country codes.....	9
City groupings.....	10
Executive summary.....	12
Chapter 1: Satisfied with living in the city.....	13
High satisfaction in cities in northern Member States and an improvement of quality of life in cities in eastern Member States.....	13
An inclusive city for all .....	22
References.....	30
Chapter 2: A safe and cohesive city.....	31
Safety and trust in European cities.....	31
Loneliness in European cities.....	37
References.....	41
Chapter 3: Job situation, finding a house and earning a living.....	42
It is not easy to find a job in cities in southern Member States.....	42
Job satisfaction is high in most cities.....	45
In most capitals, it is hard to find good housing at a reasonable price.....	48
More people are satisfied with their finances in cities in northern and western Member States.....	51
People in cities northern Member States feel more confident that they will receive more material help in case of need.....	53
References.....	56
Chapter 4: Moving around in the city.....	58
Cars are used less in capital cities.....	58
Larger cities have more public transport users.....	61
Only a few cities have a high share of daily cyclists.....	64
Walking in a typical day gains popularity.....	66
Public transport in European cities perceived as safe and accessible.....	69
References.....	72
Chapter 5: Culture, squares, parks, and healthcare in the city.....	73
Satisfaction with cultural facilities follows a striking regional pattern.....	73
Better access to green spaces means greater satisfaction.....	77
People in non-capital cities are more satisfied with their public spaces.....	80
References.....	84
Chapter 6: Healthy cities.....	86
More residents are concerned about air quality in cities in southern and eastern Member States.....	86
Large cities are louder, according to their residents.....	89
Smaller cities are cleaner, according to their residents.....	91
References.....	92
Chapter 7: Perceived quality of local public administration.....	94
Non-capital cities are found to resolve requests faster.....	94
Local public administration procedures in the capital are harder to follow.....	96
Post COVID-19, more people find it difficult to access the information and services of their local public administration online.....	98
Perception of local corruption varies widely across European cities and across education levels.....	101
References.....	106

## List of maps

Map 1: People satisfied with living in their city.....	14
Map 2: People stating that quality of life in their city has increased compared to 5 years ago.....	20
Map 3: The city is a good place for immigrants from other countries to live.....	22
Map 4: The city is a good place for LGBTIQ people to live.....	25
Map 5: The city is a good place for older people to live.....	27
Map 6: People feeling safe walking alone at night in the city.....	32
Map 7: People who think it is easy to find a good job in the city.....	43
Map 8: People satisfied with their personal job situation.....	46
Map 9: People satisfied with the financial situation of their household.....	51
Map 10: People satisfied with public transport in the city.....	70
Map 11: People satisfied with cultural facilities in the city.....	74
Map 12: People satisfied with green spaces in the city.....	78
Map 13: People satisfied with healthcare facilities in the city.....	83
Map 14: People satisfied with the quality of the air in the city.....	87
Map 15: People agreeing that there is corruption in the city's local public administration.....	102

## List of figures

Figure 1: People satisfied with living in their city, by city.....	15
Figure 2: People satisfied with living in their city, comparison between 2019 and 2023.....	16
Figure 3: People satisfied with living in their city, by socio-demographic groups.....	17
Figure 4: People satisfied with living in their city versus the city is a good place to live for people in general.....	18
Figure 5: People satisfied with living in their city versus people satisfied with the life they lead.....	19
Figure 6: People satisfied with living in their city versus people satisfied with living in their neighbourhood.....	21
Figure 7: The city is a good place for LGBTIQ people to live, by level of education.....	26
Figure 8: The city is a good place for families with young children to live, by city.....	29
Figure 9: People feeling safe walking alone at night in the city, by socio-demographic groups.....	33
Figure 10: People agreeing that most people in their city can be trusted, by city.....	34
Figure 11: People agreeing that most people in their city can be trusted, by socio-demographic groups.....	35
Figure 12: People agreeing that most people in their city can be trusted, comparison between 2019 and 2023.....	36
Figure 13: People agreeing that most people in their city can be trusted versus perceived safety in the city.....	36
Figure 14: People feeling lonely in the previous 4 weeks, by city.....	38
Figure 15: People feeling lonely in the previous 4 weeks, by socio-demographic groups.....	39
Figure 16: People feeling lonely in the previous 4 weeks versus perceived non-material social support.....	39
Figure 17: People feeling lonely in the previous 4 weeks versus access to green urban areas and satisfaction with cultural facilities.....	40
Figure 18: People thinking it is easy to find a good job in the city, by socio-demographic groups.....	44
Figure 19: People satisfied with living in the city versus people for whom it is easy to find a good job.....	44



Figure 20: People agreeing it is easy to find a good job in the city, comparison between 2019 and 2023.....	45
Figure 21: People satisfied with living in the city versus people satisfied with their job.....	47
Figure 22: People agreeing it is easy to find good housing at a reasonable price in their city, by city.....	49
Figure 23: People satisfied with living in the city versus those satisfied with the financial situation of their household.....	52
Figure 24: People feeling they will receive material help in case of need, by city.....	53
Figure 25: People satisfied with living in the city versus those feeling they will receive material help in case of need.....	54
Figure 26: People feeling they will receive material help in case of need, comparison between 2019 and 2023.....	55
Figure 27: People feeling they will receive non-material help if they need it versus people feeling they will receive material help if they need it.....	56
Figure 28: People using cars in a typical day, by city.....	59
Figure 29: People using cars in a typical day, by socio-demographic groups.....	60
Figure 30: People using cars in a typical day, comparison between 2019 and 2023.....	61
Figure 31: People using public transport in a typical day, by city.....	62
Figure 32: People using public transport in a typical day, by socio-demographic groups.....	63
Figure 33: People cycling in a typical day, by city.....	65
Figure 34: People cycling in a typical day, by socio-demographic groups.....	66
Figure 35: People walking in a typical day, by city.....	67
Figure 36: People walking in a typical day, comparison between 2019 and 2023.....	69
Figure 37: People satisfied with public transport in the city, by socio-demographic groups.....	71
Figure 38: People satisfied with living in the city versus people satisfied with public transport in the city.....	72
Figure 39: People satisfied with cultural facilities, by socio-demographic groups.....	76
Figure 40: People satisfied with green spaces in the city versus access to green areas.....	80
Figure 41: People satisfied with public spaces, by city.....	81
Figure 42: People satisfied with air quality in the city versus 2020 annual average concentration of fine particles (PM2.5).....	88
Figure 43: People satisfied to live in capital cities versus 2020 annual average of air-pollution indicator (fine particles, PM2.5).....	89
Figure 44: People satisfied with the noise level in their city, by city.....	90
Figure 45: People satisfied with cleanliness in their city, by city.....	92
Figure 46: People satisfied with the time it takes to get a request solved by the local public administration, by city.....	95
Figure 47: People agreeing that the procedures used by the city's local public administration are straightforward and easy to understand, by city.....	97
Figure 48: People agreeing that the information and services of their local public administration are easy to access online, by city.....	99
Figure 49: People agreeing that the information and services of their local public administration are easy to access online, comparison between 2019 and 2023.....	101
Figure 50: People agreeing that there is corruption in the city's local public administration, by city.....	103
Figure 51: People agreeing that there is corruption in the city's local public administration, by level of education.....	104
Figure 52: People satisfied with living in the city versus perceived corruption in the local public administration.....	105
Figure 53: People agreeing that there is corruption in the city's local public administration, comparison between 2019 and 2023.....	106

## List of tables

Table 1: People satisfied with living in their city, top and bottom 10 scores.....	16
Table 2: People stating that quality of life in the city improved compared to 5 years ago, top and bottom 10 scores.....	21
Table 3: The city is a good place for immigrants from other countries to live, top and bottom 10 scores.....	24
Table 4: The city is a good place for LGBTIQ people to live, top and bottom 10 scores.....	26
Table 5: The city is a good place for older people to live, top and bottom 10 scores.....	28
Table 6: The city is a good place for families with young children to live, top and bottom 10 scores.....	28
Table 7: People feeling safe walking alone at night in the city, top and bottom 10 scores.....	31
Table 8: People agreeing that most people in their city can be trusted, top and bottom 10 scores.....	33
Table 9: People feeling lonely in the previous 4 weeks, top and bottom 10 scores.....	37
Table 10: People who think it is easy to find a good job in the city, top and bottom 10 scores.....	42
Table 11: People satisfied with their personal job situation, top and bottom 10 scores.....	47
Table 12: People who agree that it is easy to find good housing at a reasonable price in their city, top and bottom 10 scores.....	50
Table 13: People satisfied with the financial situation of their household, top and bottom 10 scores.....	52
Table 14: People feeling they will receive material help in case of need, top and bottom 10 scores.....	54
Table 15: People using cars in a typical day, top and bottom 10 scores.....	60
Table 16: People using public transport in a typical day, top and bottom 10 scores.....	63
Table 17: People cycling in a typical day, top and bottom 10 scores.....	64
Table 18: People walking in a typical day, top and bottom 10 scores.....	68
Table 19: People satisfied with public transport in the city, top and bottom 10 scores.....	70
Table 20: People satisfied with cultural facilities in the city, top and bottom 10.....	75
Table 21: People satisfied with green spaces in the city, top and bottom 10 scores.....	79
Table 22: People satisfied with public spaces in the city, top and bottom 10 scores.....	82
Table 23: People satisfied with healthcare services in the city, top and bottom 10 scores.....	84
Table 24: People satisfied with the quality of the air in the city, top and bottom 10 scores.....	88
Table 25: People satisfied with the noise level in their city, top and bottom 10 scores.....	89
Table 26: People satisfied with cleanliness in the city, top and bottom 10 scores.....	91
Table 27: People satisfied with the time it takes to get a request solved by a city's local public administration, top and bottom 10 scores.....	96
Table 28: People agreeing that the procedures used by the city's local public administration are straightforward and easy to understand, top and bottom 10 scores.....	98
Table 29: People agreeing that the information and services of the city's local public administration can be easily accessed online, top and bottom 10 scores.....	100
Table 30: People agreeing that there is corruption in the city's local public administration, top and bottom 10 scores.....	104

## List of cities in the survey, by country

Note: \* indicates cities for which survey results of 2019 and 2023 are not comparable.

Note: Results of 2019 and 2023 are considered not comparable where one or more LAU units were removed or added to the city definition. Only in case of the addition or removal of some very small LAU units (in countries where LAU units are small) could such changes be disregarded.

### EUROPEAN UNION

<b>Belgium</b> Antwerp Brussels (Greater) Liège	Málaga Oviedo	<b>Netherlands</b> Amsterdam (Greater) Groningen Rotterdam (Greater)	<b>OTHER COUNTRIES</b> <b>Albania</b> Tirana*
<b>Bulgaria</b> Burgas Sofia	<b>France</b> Bordeaux Lille Marseille Rennes Strasbourg Paris (Greater)*	<b>Austria</b> Graz Vienna	<b>Iceland</b> Reykjavik
<b>Czechia</b> Ostrava Prague	<b>Croatia</b> Zagreb	<b>Poland</b> Białystok Kraków Gdańsk Warsaw	<b>North Macedonia</b> Skopje
<b>Denmark</b> Aalborg Copenhagen (Greater)	<b>Italy</b> Bologna Naples (Greater) Palermo Rome Turin Verona	<b>Portugal</b> Braga Lisbon	<b>Montenegro</b> Podgorica
<b>Germany</b> Berlin Dortmund Essen Hamburg Leipzig Munich Rostock	<b>Cyprus</b> Nicosia	<b>Romania</b> Bucharest Cluj Napoca Piatra Neamț	<b>Norway</b> Oslo
<b>Estonia</b> Tallinn	<b>Latvia</b> Riga	<b>Slovenia</b> Ljubljana	<b>Serbia (RS)</b> Belgrade
<b>Ireland</b> Dublin	<b>Lithuania</b> Vilnius	<b>Slovakia</b> Bratislava Košice	<b>Switzerland</b> Geneva Zürich
<b>Greece</b> Athens* Heraklion	<b>Luxembourg</b> Luxembourg	<b>Finland</b> Helsinki Oulu	<b>Türkiye</b> Ankara Istanbul* Antalya Diyabakir
<b>Spain</b> Barcelona (Greater) Madrid*	<b>Hungary</b> Budapest Miskolc	<b>Sweden</b> Malmö Stockholm (Greater)	<b>United Kingdom</b> Belfast* Cardiff Glasgow* London (Greater) Manchester (Greater) Tyneside conurbation (Greater)
	<b>Malta</b> Valletta (Greater)		

## Country codes

### EUROPEAN UNION

<b>BE:</b> Belgium	<b>HR:</b> Croatia	<b>PL:</b> Poland	<b>OTHER COUNTRIES</b>
<b>BG:</b> Bulgaria	<b>IT:</b> Italy	<b>PT:</b> Portugal	<b>AL:</b> Albania
<b>CZ:</b> Czechia	<b>CY:</b> Cyprus	<b>RO:</b> Romania	<b>CH:</b> Switzerland
<b>DK:</b> Denmark	<b>LV:</b> Latvia	<b>SI:</b> Slovenia	<b>IS:</b> Iceland
<b>DE:</b> Germany	<b>LT:</b> Lithuania	<b>SK:</b> Slovakia	<b>MK:</b> North Macedonia
<b>EE:</b> Estonia	<b>LU:</b> Luxembourg	<b>FI:</b> Finland	<b>NO:</b> Norway
<b>IE:</b> Ireland	<b>HU:</b> Hungary	<b>SE:</b> Sweden	<b>RS:</b> Serbia
<b>EL:</b> Greece	<b>MT:</b> Malta		<b>TR:</b> Türkiye
<b>ES:</b> Spain	<b>NL:</b> Netherlands		<b>UK:</b> United Kingdom
<b>FR:</b> France	<b>AT:</b> Austria		

## City groupings

For analytical purposes, surveyed cities have been divided into the following groups.

### Country grouping

- ▶ **Northern Member States** cities in Denmark, Finland and Sweden.
- ▶ **Eastern Member States:** cities in Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia.
- ▶ **Western Member States:** cities in Belgium, Germany, Ireland, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Austria.
- ▶ **Southern Member States:** cities in Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Malta and Portugal.
- ▶ **EFTA:** cities in Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, excluding Liechtenstein, which is not covered by the survey.
- ▶ **Western Balkans:** cities in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

### Grouping by city population size

- ▶ **Less than 250 000 inhabitants:** Aalborg, Braga, Burgas, Groningen, Heraklion, Košice, Luxembourg, Miskolc, Nicosia, Oulu, Oviedo, Piatra Neamț, Podgorica, Reykjavik and Rostock.
- ▶ **Between 250 000 and 500 000 inhabitants:** Belfast, Białystok, Bologna, Bratislava, Cardiff, Cluj-Napoca, Gdańsk, Geneva, Graz, Liège, Ljubljana, Malmö, Ostrava, Rennes, Skopje, Strasbourg, Tallinn, Valletta and Verona.
- ▶ **Between 500 000 and 1 000 000 inhabitants:** Antwerp, Bordeaux, Dortmund, Essen, Kraków, Leipzig, Lille, Málaga, Marseille, Oslo, Palermo, Rīga, Tirana, Turin, Tyneside conurbation, Vilnius, Zagreb and Zürich.
- ▶ **Between 1 000 000 and 5 000 000 inhabitants:** Amsterdam, Antalya, Athens, Barcelona, Beograd, Berlin, Brussels, Bucharest, Budapest, Copenhagen, Diyarbakir, Dublin, Glasgow, Hamburg, Helsinki, Lisbon, Manchester, Munich, Naples, Prague, Rome, Rotterdam, Sofia, Stockholm, Vienna and Warsaw.
- ▶ **More than 5 000 000 inhabitants:** Ankara, Istanbul, London, Madrid and Paris.

### Socioeconomic groupings

- ▶ **Level of education:** Basic (ISCED 0–2), secondary (ISCED 3–4), tertiary (ISCED 5–8).
- ▶ **Working status:** Employed full time, employed part time, unemployed, retired, other (this group includes those unable to work due to long-standing health problems, in full-time education, full-time homemaker, compulsory military or civilian service, other).
- ▶ **Age group:** 15 to 24 years old, 25 to 39 years old, 40 to 54 years old, 55 years old and older.
- ▶ **Household composition:** one-person household, couple without kids, household with kids below 15, other (this group includes lone parents with at least one child aged less than 25, lone parents with all children aged 25 or more, couples with at least one child aged less than 25, couples with all children aged 25 or more, other type of household).

### Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities

The survey was conducted by IPSOS – on request of the European Commission Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy – between January and April 2023. It includes cities in the Member States of the European Union and cities in Albania, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, North Macedonia, Serbia, Switzerland, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom.

The survey asks about the respondents' satisfaction with a number of features of city life, such as inclusiveness, loneliness, employment, safety, housing, environment, transport, culture, city services and corruption.

A sample of at least 839 residents was interviewed in each city, for a total of 71 153 completed interviews. For more information on the survey see: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/information-sources/maps/quality-of-life\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/maps/quality-of-life_en).





## Executive summary

This report presents the main findings from the sixth survey on the quality of life of European cities. The survey covers 83 cities across the EU, European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries, the United Kingdom, the western Balkans and Türkiye and allows for comparison with the last edition of the survey, conducted in 2019.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in Europe at the beginning of 2020, and Russian's unjustified invasion of Ukraine may have had an impact on the way people perceive quality of life in the city where they live. These crises have placed immense stress on urban infrastructure, healthcare systems, economies and social dynamics. Lockdowns, restrictions and reduced tourism hit the residents and economies of European cities hard. The ongoing Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has led to the displacement of many individuals, both internally and externally. European cities became destinations for these displaced people, adding pressure on resources and services.

Having a tool able to reveal how people evaluate quality of life in their city data offers invaluable insights for policymakers at the European, national and city levels, guiding strategies for cohesive urban development and fostering improved living conditions across Europe.

The results of the 2023 exercise show that overall satisfaction across European cities has declined compared to the satisfaction levels recorded in 2019, but remains high, with almost nine out of ten people reporting to be satisfied with living in their city. Amid the overall decline, results confirm what was already observed in 2019, that is significant improvements in perceived quality of life in cities in eastern Member States.

Cities in Europe are perceived as being more inclusive than the country they are in. On average, the share of city residents who think their city is a good place for LGBTIQ people to live is higher than the national average.

Smaller cities are perceived as being a better place to live for older people and for families with young children. People feel safer walking alone at night in smaller cities, and they perceive their city as being cleaner and less noisy than people living in larger cities.

On average, people in non-capital cities are more satisfied with the availability of public spaces and health care, and with housing affordability. Non-capital cities are also seen as a better place to live for migrants and for families with young children, and people in non-capital cities are more satisfied with their local public administration.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the profound challenges of loneliness and social isolation everywhere, but especially in cities, which are typically associated with busy streets and vibrant social interactions. Nearly 13 % of city residents report that they felt lonely, a value very close to the one observed in a recent pan-European survey conducted at the national level. Young adults in cities are more likely to report feeling lonely than their middle-aged and older peers. But city amenities might help: residents with higher access to cultural facilities and green urban areas are less likely to feel lonely.

Urban mobility in European cities is a critical aspect of daily life. While car usage is still high in cities, public transport follows closely, and walking has gained popularity in more recent years. On average, around seven out of ten people declare to be satisfied with public transport in their city. Public transport is perceived by most people as being safe and accessible.

Opinions on the performance of local public administration are mixed. On average, around half of city residents are satisfied with the time taken to respond to a request. Around seven out of ten people say that they could easily access the information and services of their local public administration online, but this share has decreased in most cities since 2019. The pandemic sped up the pace of digital transformation in the EU, including in public administration, but may have also exacerbated existing inequalities in digital skills. Finally, perception of corruption in public administration is highest in capital cities.

## Chapter 1: Satisfied with living in the city

Quality of life includes all factors that influence what people value in living, beyond the purely material aspects (Eurostat, 2015). It depends not only on objective, verifiable aspects such as income and education, but also on feelings and perceptions about one's standard of living, the quality of society and the environment around us. Measuring perceived quality of life can be particularly valuable in the aftermath of major events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a strong impact on life satisfaction and overall well-being besides the impact on health and socioeconomic outcomes (Blanchflower and Bryson, 2023).

Many issues linked to quality of life – housing costs, clean air, cultural amenities (e.g. access to museums), transport, job opportunities, risks (e.g. crime) – depend on where a person lives, which is why where people live affects their quality of life (Marans, 2015; Mouratidis, 2021). There are certain amenities that may be especially relevant for the quality of life of specific groups of people, such as families and older adults. Moreover, the quality of life of minority groups may depend on perceptions of inclusiveness of the city and of its inhabitants. Recent research has shown that policies that are able to improve a city's amenities, its inclusivity and its safety are likely to also increase residents' satisfaction with living in that city (Castelli et al., 2022).

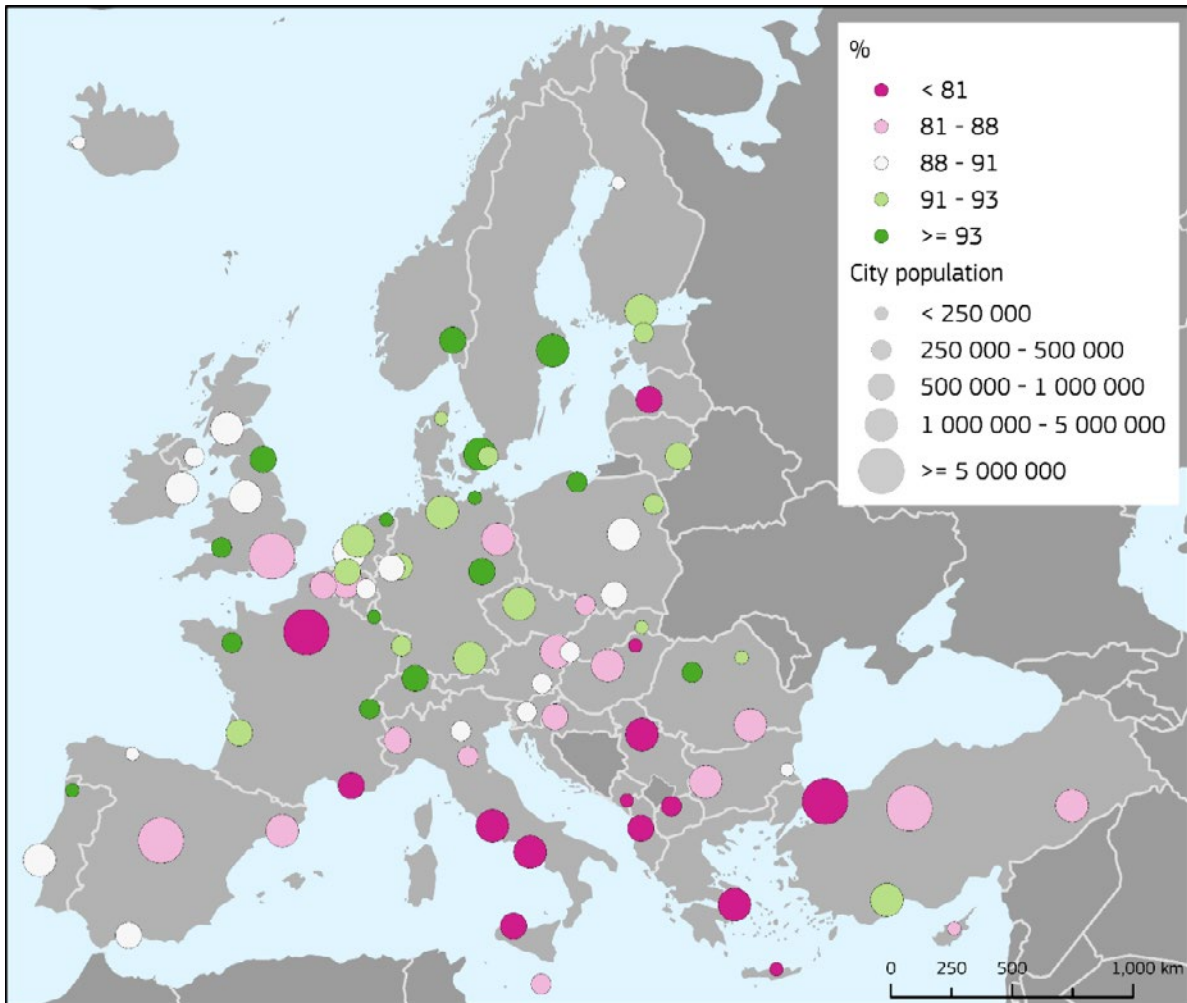
This chapter presents results on residents' satisfaction with living in their city and the extent to which this has changed compared to 2019. It then describes whether people think their city is a good place to live for four groups of residents: immigrants from other countries, LGBTIQ people, families with young children and older people.

### High satisfaction in cities in northern Member States and an improvement of quality of life in cities in eastern Member States

Almost nine out of ten people (87 %) in the European cities included in the survey are satisfied with living in their city. More people are satisfied in cities in the EU, EFTA and the United Kingdom, while fewer are satisfied in the cities in the western Balkans and Türkiye. Among EU cities, satisfaction is highest in those located in the northern and western Member States (93 % and 90 %, respectively). On average, the cities in southern Member States score lower (81 %) due to the low scores in the Greek and the southern Italian cities (Map 1). Overall, non-capital cities (at 88 %) score higher than capital cities (85 %). While capital cities may offer more employment opportunities and amenities, they are also perceived as providing a poorer quality of public services and less affordable housing opportunities (Eurofound, 2020; European Commission, 2020).

Studies show that in more developed countries, happiness or subjective well-being are often higher in smaller cities than in larger ones (Burger et al., 2020). This is also true in the present survey. Around 89 % of people living in a city with less than 250 000 inhabitants are satisfied with living in that city. This drops to 86 % for cities with a population between 1 and 5 million. The average of the five cities with over 5 million inhabitants (Ankara, Istanbul, London, Madrid and Paris) is even lower (79 %), mainly because Istanbul's score is low, at 65 %.

**Map 1: People satisfied with living in their city**



**Overall satisfaction in the city**

I am satisfied to live in the city: total agree (%)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

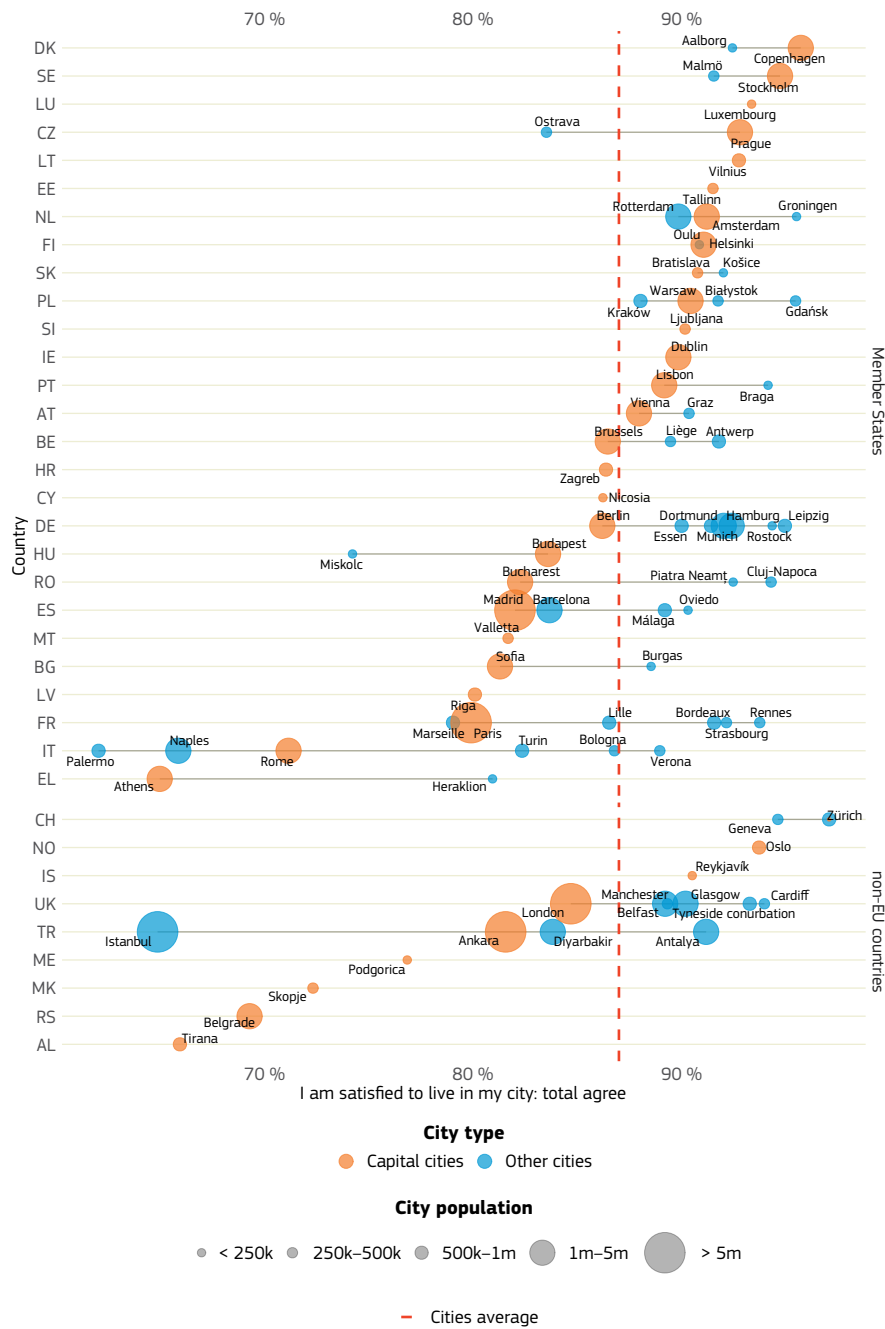
The level of overall satisfaction in the city varies significantly across cities, including within the same country (Figure 1). The largest intra-country differences are observed in Italy, Türkiye and Greece. In Italy, percentages of residents satisfied with the city where they live range between 89 % in Verona and 62 % in Palermo, a difference of 27 percentage points (pp). Only 65 % of people living in Istanbul are satisfied with living in their city, compared to 91 % of those living in Antalya. The two Greek cities in the survey score below the overall average, with the

lowest percentage found in Athens (65 %) and the highest in Heraklion, where 81 % of the residents are satisfied with living in their city.

Among the 83 cities included in the survey, Zürich (CH) is ranked first, with around 97 % of residents satisfied with living in their city. Copenhagen (DK) and Groningen (NL) are close behind, with around 96 % of residents satisfied with life in their cities (Table 1).



Figure 1: People satisfied with living in their city, by city



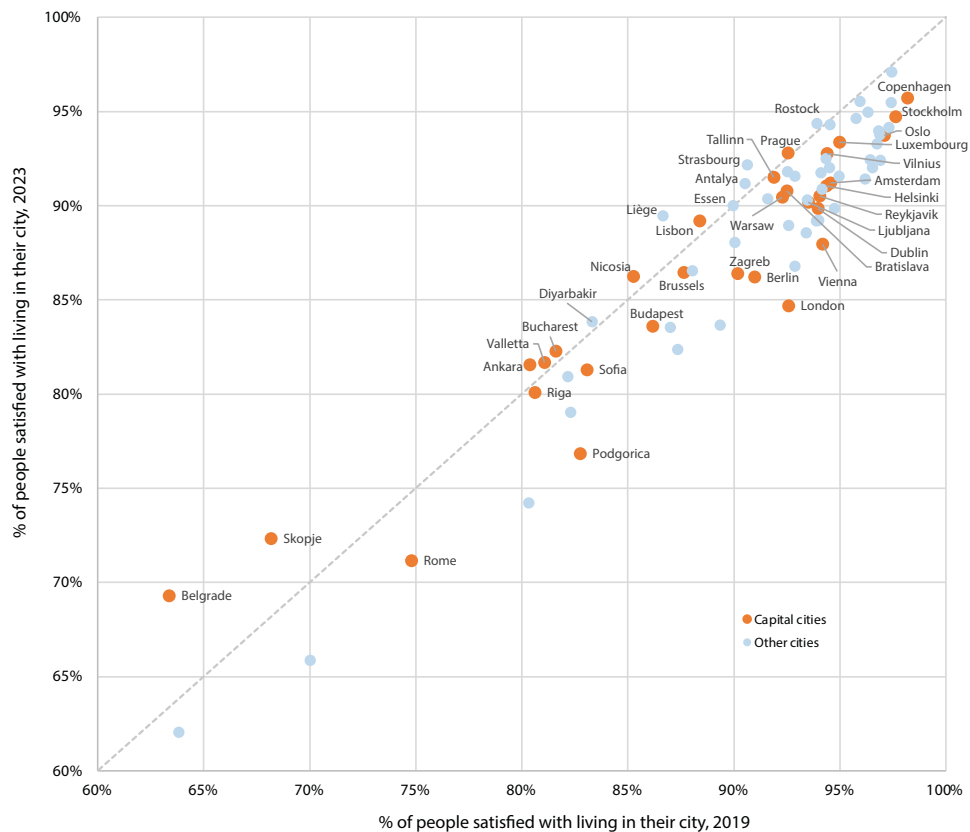
Source: European Commission / DG Regional and Urban Policy, Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

**Table 1:** People satisfied with living in their city, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Zürich (CH)	97 %	Palermo (IT)	62 %
Copenhagen (DK)	96 %	Athens (EL)	65 %
Groningen (NL)	96 %	Istanbul (TR)	65 %
Gdańsk (PL)	95 %	Tirana (AL)	66 %
Leipzig (DE)	95 %	Naples (IT)	66 %
Stockholm (SE)	95 %	Belgrade (RS)	69 %
Geneva (CH)	95 %	Rome (IT)	71 %
Rostock (DE)	94 %	Skopje (MK)	72 %
Cluj-Napoca (RO)	94 %	Miskolc (HU)	74 %
Braga (PT)	94 %	Podgorica (ME)	77 %

Source: European Commission / DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

**Figure 2:** People satisfied with living in their city, comparison between 2019 and 2023

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2019 and 2023.

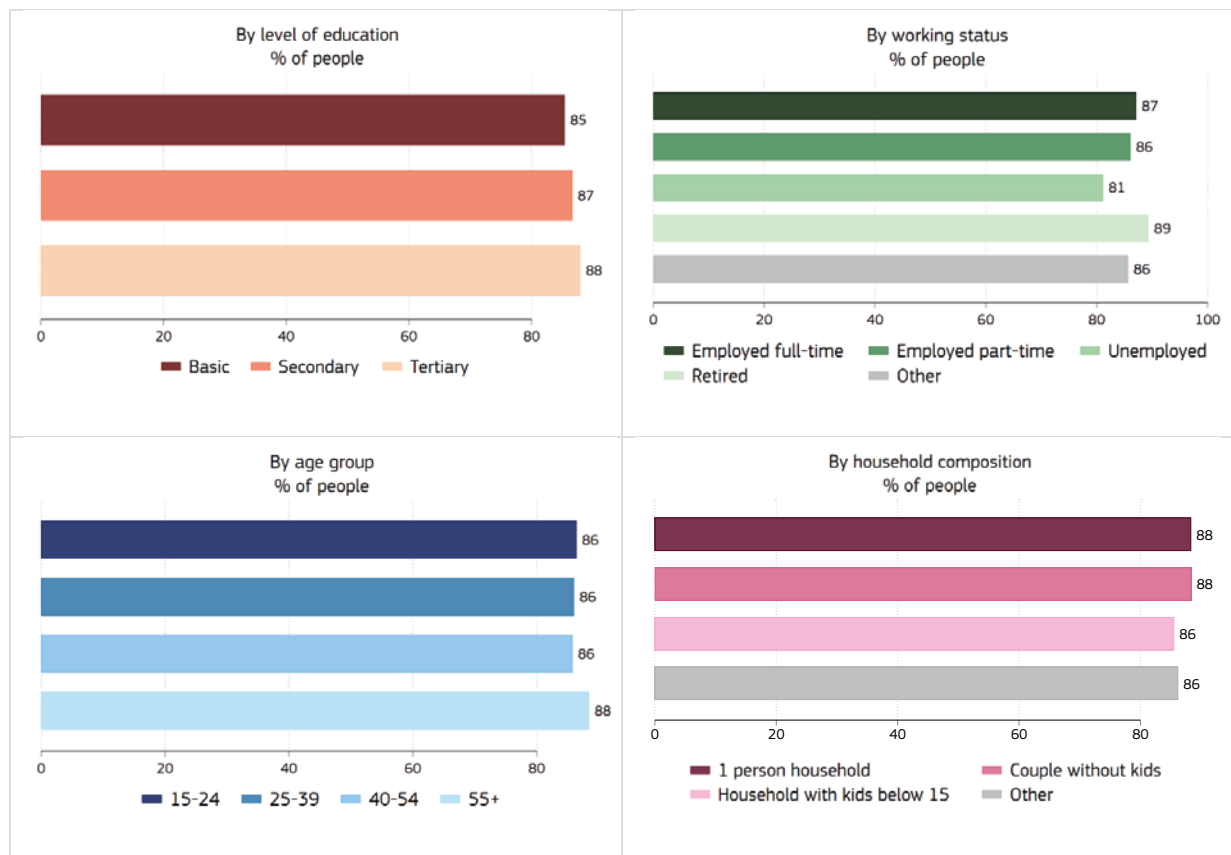
Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). The dashed line is a 45-degree line (no change between 2019 and 2023). The chart only includes cities for which a time comparison can be made (see page 9).

Between 2019 and 2023, the degree of satisfaction with living in the city slightly decreased in most cities (Figure 2). This is in line with findings on life satisfaction at the national level in Europe; life satisfaction rates dropped substantially after the COVID-19 outbreak and recovered afterwards but have not yet reached pre-pandemic levels in 2023 (Blanchflower and Bryson, 2023). A significant drop (of more than 3 pp) is observed in 34 out of the 76 cities for which a comparison is feasible <sup>(1)</sup>. The largest decreases in satisfaction can be seen in London (UK, 85 %, – 8 pp), Vienna (AT, 87 %, – 6 pp), Bologna (IT, 87 %, – 6 pp) and Miskolc (HU, 74 %, – 6 pp). The largest increases are observed in Belgrade (RS, 69 %, + 6 pp), Skopje (MK, 72 %, + 4 pp) and Liège (BE, 89 %, + 3 pp). Interestingly, Belgrade and Skopje are among the 10 cities with the lowest satisfaction levels, meaning that these cities managed to reduce part of the gap with cities with a high degree of resident satisfaction.

Satisfaction with living in the city appears to increase moderately with the residents' level of education. Reported satisfaction is 85 % for residents with at most basic education and around 88 % for those with tertiary education (Figure 3). Full-time employed (at 87 %) and retired residents (at 89 %) show the highest levels of city satisfaction. These results are in line with those for 2019 (European Commission, 2020), as well as with findings on life satisfaction at the national level (Eurostat, 2015).

The differences in satisfaction by age are small. However, a slightly higher level of satisfaction is observed for residents over the age of 55 (88 %) as compared to residents in other age groups (86 %), in line with the evidence found for life satisfaction in high-income countries (Steptoe et al., 2015). In terms of household composition, the satisfaction of residents is higher for one-person households and couples without children, with around 88 % of them satisfied with living in their city against 86 % of households with children younger than 15 years old.

**Figure 3:** People satisfied with living in their city, by socio-demographic groups



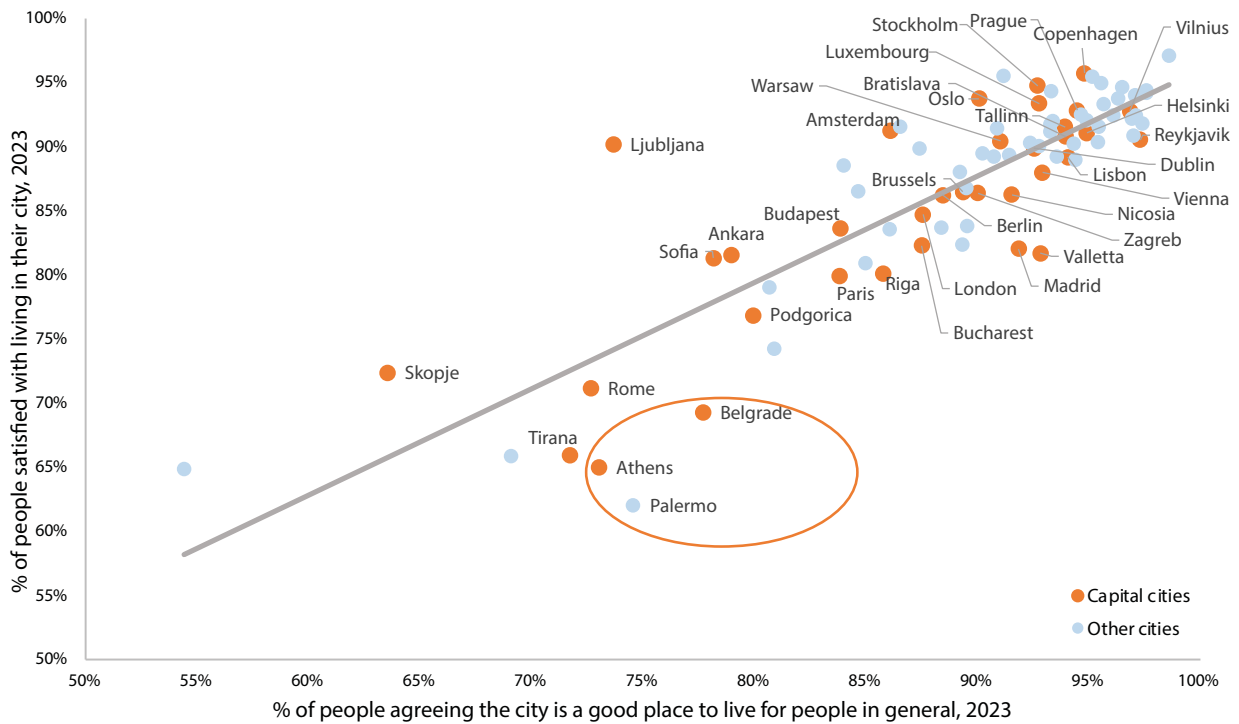
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

The survey also asked people whether they think that the city where they live is a good place to live for people in general, thus going beyond their personal situation. Across the cities included in the survey, a positive correlation (of around 0.9) can be found between the percentage of people satisfied with their city and those who agree that the city where they live is a good place to

live for people in general (Figure 4). However, in some cities such as Palermo (IT), Athens (EL) and Belgrade (RS), residents are less satisfied to live in the city compared to what they believe the city can offer people in general.

<sup>1</sup> For the list of cities for which a comparison is feasible, see page 9.

**Figure 4:** People satisfied with living in their city versus the city is a good place to live for people in general



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

A good city to live in has also been found to foster people's overall satisfaction with their own life (OECD, 2016). Across the cities included in the survey, a positive correlation (of around 0.8) can again be found between the percentage of people satisfied with their city and those who are more satisfied in general with the life they lead (Figure 5). This is represented by

a large group of cities in the top right of the chart. Nevertheless, there are cities, such as Palermo (IT), where people are less satisfied on average with the city where they live than the life they lead. The opposite is true for Heraklion (EL) and Piatra Neamț (RO).

**Figure 5: People satisfied with living in their city versus people satisfied with the life they lead**

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.

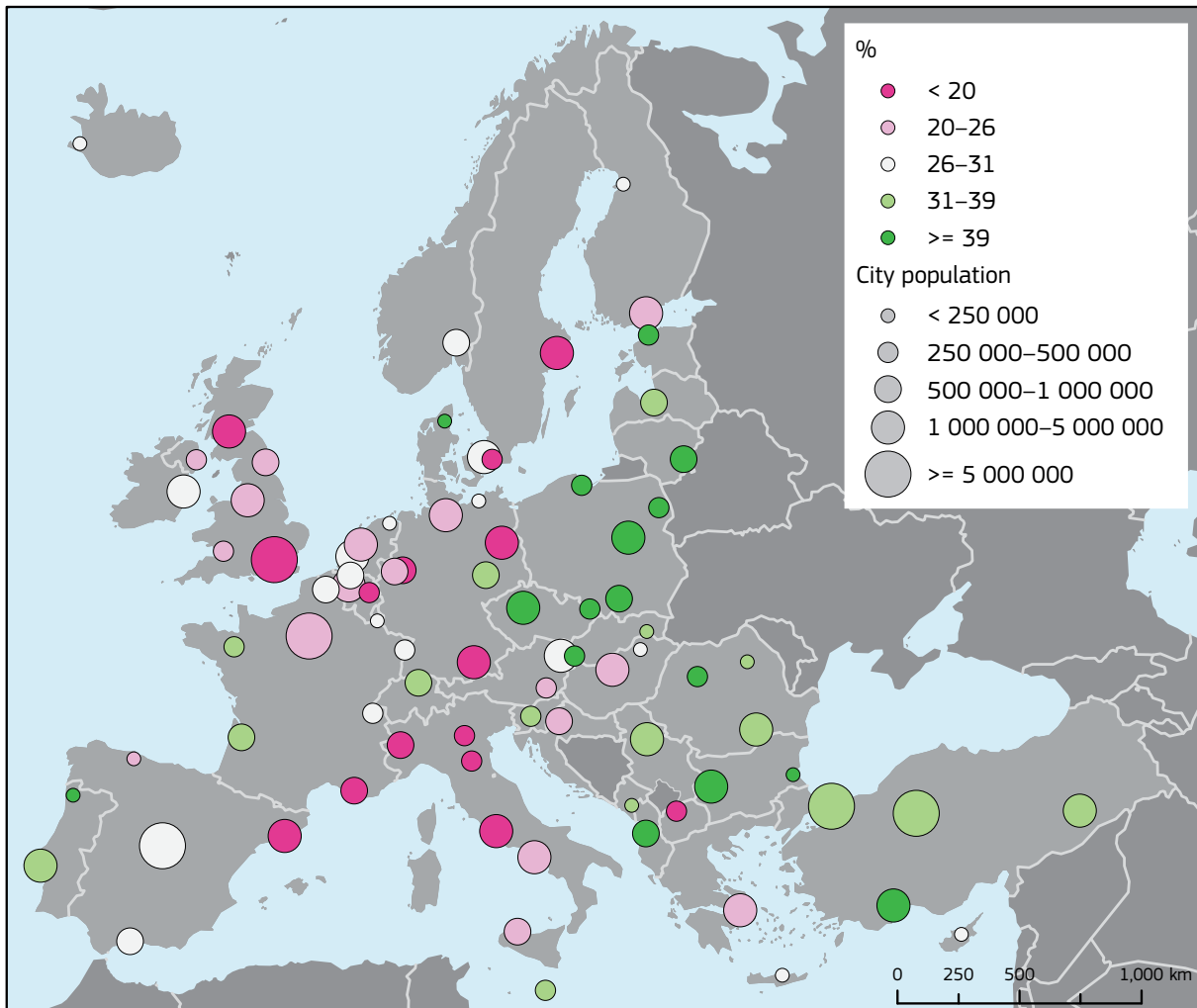
Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

The survey asked how the quality of life in their city has changed compared to 5 years ago. Respondents could answer: the quality of life [i] increased, [ii] decreased, or [iii] stayed the same. On average, across all sampled cities, as well as in EU cities only, 31 % stated that the quality of life in their city has increased over the past 5 years, 40 % said it had stayed unchanged, and around 29 % answered that the quality of life in their cities had declined. While overall satisfaction has been found to be highest in cities located in northern and western

Member States, residents of cities in eastern Member States more frequently report improvements in the quality of life in their city (Map 2). Indeed, most cities in eastern Member States score high, with an average of 44 % of residents stating that quality of life in their city has increased compared to 5 years ago, followed by cities in western and northern Member States (26 %). Conversely, only 24 % of residents in cities in southern Member States declared that the quality of life in their city has improved <sup>(2)</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Results for the remaining two options are available online at: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/information-sources/maps/quality-of-life\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/maps/quality-of-life_en).

**Map 2: People stating that quality of life in their city has increased compared to 5 years ago**



### Quality of life in the city increased

Compared to five years ago, quality of life in my city or area has increased: yes (%)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

While, on average, no significant differences can be found among residents in capital and non-capital cities, residents of smaller cities more frequently reported improvements. Around 33 % of residents in cities with less than 250 000 inhabitants reported that quality of life had increased, while in cities with 1 to 5 million inhabitants only 28 % declared that the quality of life had increased.

Among the 83 cities included in the survey, Białystok (PL), Gdańsk (PL) and Cluj-Napoca (RO) are ranked first, with around 60 % of residents declaring that the quality of life in their cities

has increased. Rome (IT), Skopje (MK) and Bologna (IT), show the lowest scores, with less than 15 % of residents declaring that the quality of life in their city increased in the past 5 years. Nevertheless, these low figures hide a relevant difference between the two Italian cities. In 2023, overall satisfaction with living in the city in Bologna stands at 87 %, close to the EU average, while in Rome it is 71 %. Nonetheless, in both Italian cities the relative majority of residents (57 % in Rome and 39 % in Bologna) answered that quality of life has declined.



**Table 2:** People stating that quality of life in the city has increased compared to 5 years ago, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Białystok (PL)	62 %	Rome (IT)	3 %
Gdańsk (PL)	60 %	Skopje (MK)	13 %
Cluj-Napoca (RO)	59 %	Bologna (IT)	14 %
Vilnius (LT)	56 %	Stockholm (SE)	15 %
Ostrava (CZ)	55 %	Munich (DE)	15 %
Kraków (PL)	53 %	Barcelona (ES)	16 %
Tallinn (EE)	53 %	Turin (IT)	16 %
Sofia (BG)	52 %	Malmö (SE)	17 %
Warsaw (PL)	46 %	Dortmund (DE)	17 %
Antalya (TR)	45 %	Berlin (DE)	18 %

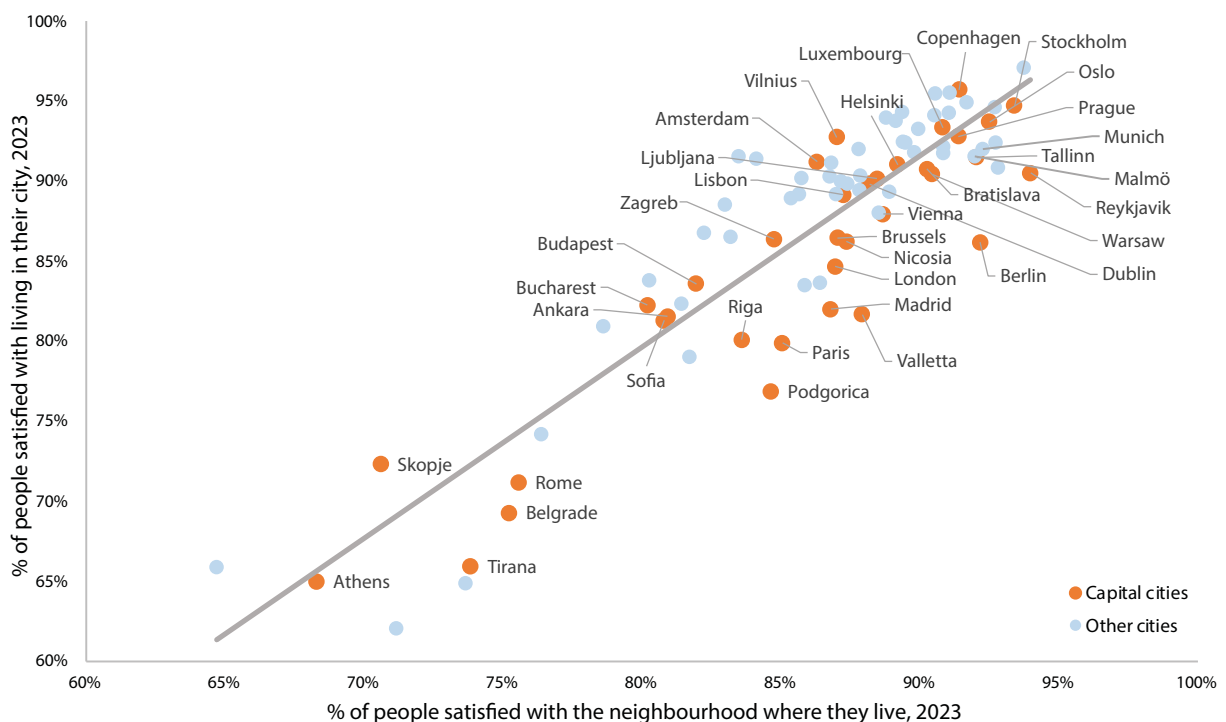
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

A large majority (86 %) of residents in the European cities included in the survey rate the overall quality of life in their neighbourhood positively, only one percentage point lower than the percentage for overall satisfaction of living in the city. Satisfaction with living in one's neighbourhood is higher in EU cities (86 %) and EFTA and UK cities (90 %) than in Türkiye and western Balkan cities (80 % and 76 %, respectively). Among EU cities, satisfaction is highest in cities located in the northern Member States (92 %), while it is lowest in cities located in southern Member States (82 %). Over the whole of Europe, satisfaction with living in the neighbourhood is similar in both capital (86 %) and non-capital cities (86 %).

In 20 of the 83 cities in the sample, residents are on average more satisfied with the neighbourhood than the city where they live. Of these 20 cities, 14 are European capital cities. In Sofia (BG), Munich (DE), Tallinn (EE), Brussels (BE), Warsaw (PL) and Malmö (SE), the share of residents satisfied with living in the city is the same as the share satisfied with their neighbourhood.

Across all cities in the survey, there is a strong correlation (of around 0.9) between satisfaction with the city and with the neighbourhood where residents live (Figure 6).

**Figure 6:** People satisfied with living in their city versus people satisfied with living in their neighbourhood



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

## An inclusive city for all

To assess how people perceive their cities' attitudes towards different groups (i.e. immigrants, LGBTIQ people, older people and families with young children), the survey asked residents the following question: 'Is the city where you live a good place or not a good place to live for the following groups?'. Residents could choose between 'a good place to live' and 'not a good place to live'.

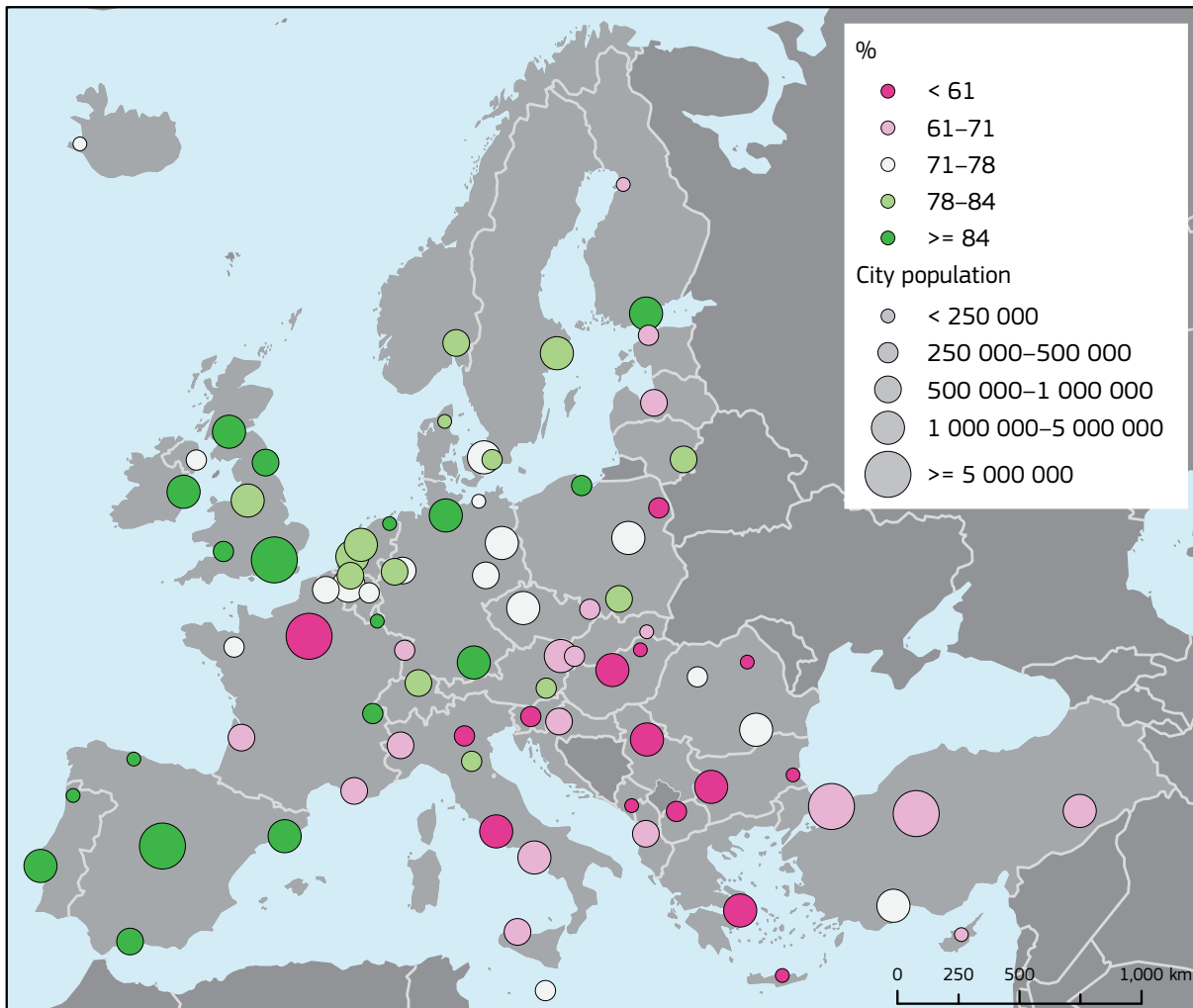
### Non-capital cities are seen as a better place for immigrants to live

Within the EU, people who are foreign-born, i.e. born in another EU Member State or outside the EU, are more likely to live in cities. They represent 15 % of the population of cities, compared to 10 % in towns and 6 % in rural areas (Natale et al., 2019).

Foreign-born people may have specific needs and value certain city characteristics and amenities differently than the rest of

the population (Albouy et al., 2021). They are less able to rely on a strong social network and may have different integration needs. Moreover, immigrants are likely to be more impacted by the quality of certain local-level policies, since they are more likely to be unemployed and to live in overcrowded conditions (Scapolo et al., 2022). Immigrants, and non-EU citizens in particular, are also more likely to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to host-country nationals.

**Map 3:** The city is a good place for immigrants from other countries to live



### The city is a good place to live for immigrants from other countries

The city where I live is a good place to live for immigrants from other countries: yes (%)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Three out of four residents (73 %) said that their city was a good place for immigrants from other countries to live (Map 3). Within the EU, cities in the northern Member States perform best (79 %). Cities in the eastern Member States score lower, with only two out of three residents agreeing that their city is a good place for immigrants to live (67 %). In contrast, in all Spanish and Portuguese cities, at least 84 % of residents consider their cities a good place for immigrants to live, well above the southern Member States average (73 %).

#### **Neighbourhood Mothers Neukölln – Stadtteilmütter Neukölln: integrating immigrant mothers via local women, Germany**

'Neighbourhood mothers', known as Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln in Germany, is a grassroots outreach project aiming to facilitate access to information and services that help families from immigrant backgrounds with children up to 12 years old. It was launched in 2004 in Berlin's Neukölln area, with 12 Turkish mothers receiving training to support newly arrived mothers. It has now become a network of more than 70 neighbourhood mothers from various nationalities, and helps to integrate families and create a cohesive community. This project empowers women on both sides of the relationship: newcomers receive valuable advice and information and gain confidence, while neighbourhood mothers gain employment income and status. The support benefits the local community, increases integration and boosts interaction with immigrant families and social cohesion.

The total amount of investment for the project is EUR 2 725 463, of which the EU's European Regional Development Fund contributed EUR 1 050 828 from the Berlin operational programme for the 2007–2013 and 2014–2020 programming periods.

See also: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/projects/Germany/neighbourhood-mothers-neukolln-stadtteilmutter-neukolln-integrating-immigrant-mothers-via-local-women](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/Germany/neighbourhood-mothers-neukolln-stadtteilmutter-neukolln-integrating-immigrant-mothers-via-local-women).

In fact, capital and non-capital cities behave quite differently, with non-capital cities considered to be a good place for immigrants by a higher share of people (75 % versus 70 %). In the top 10 cities, eight are non-capital cities (Table 3). The top 10 includes three UK and two Portuguese cities. The bottom 10 has three cities in the eastern Member States, three cities in southern Member States, three in the western Balkans and one French city. The gap between the two extremes is wide. In Cardiff (UK), almost everybody thinks the city is a good place for immigrants, while in Skopje (MK), only one in three people think that.

On average, the share of city dwellers who think their city is a good place for immigrants is similar to the national share <sup>(3)</sup>. However, there are countries with cities with much higher scores than the national score, such as Croatia (66 % for Zagreb versus 42 % at the national level), Poland (87 % for Gdańsk versus 65 %), Slovakia (71 % for Bratislava versus 50 %) and Türkiye (75 % for Antalya versus 52 %). On the contrary, several capital cities rank well below the national average, particularly Paris (FR, 54 % versus 75 %), Rome (IT, 54 % versus 75 %), Ljubljana (SI, 57 % versus 72 %), Brussels (BE, 71 % versus 88 %) and, outside the EU, Skopje (MK, 33 % versus 49 %).

<sup>3</sup> Source: Gallup World Poll 2022; question: 'Is the city or area where you live a good place or not a good place to live for immigrants from other countries?'

**Table 3:** The city is a good place for immigrants from other countries to live, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Cardiff (UK)	95 %	Skopje (MK)	33 %
Lisbon (PT)	90 %	Sofia (BG)	49 %
Braga (PT)	89 %	Paris (FR)	54 %
Groningen (NL)	88 %	Rome (IT)	54 %
Gdańsk (PL)	87 %	Białystok (PL)	54 %
Barcelona (ES)	87 %	Belgrade (RS)	55 %
Tyneside conurbation (UK)	87 %	Verona (IT)	57 %
Hamburg (DE)	87 %	Ljubljana (SI)	57 %
Helsinki (FI)	86 %	Podgorica (ME)	58 %
Glasgow (UK)	86 %	Heraklion (EL)	59 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

### Most cities seen as better places for LGBTIQ people to live than the rest of the country

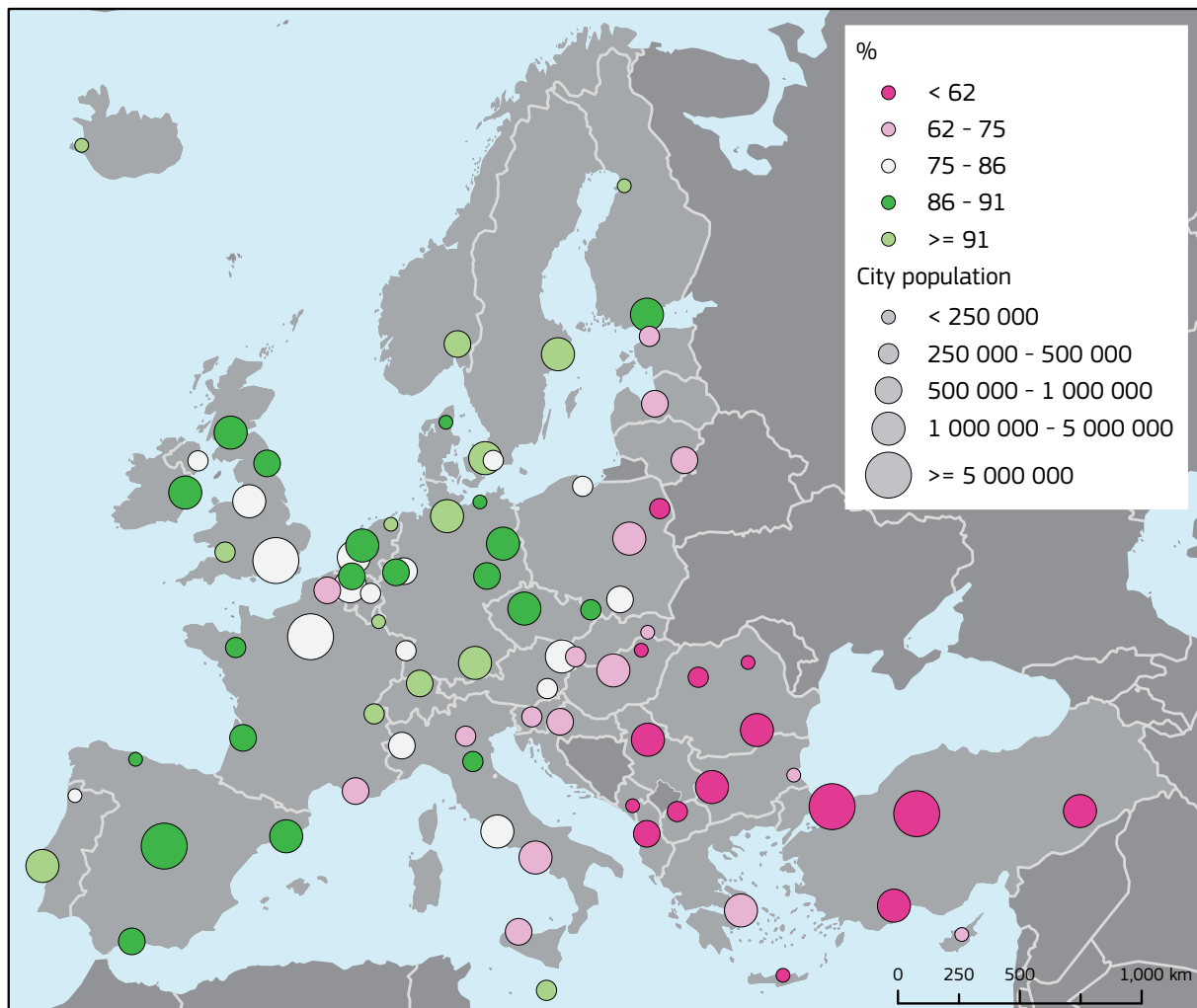
A growing number of countries in the UE and worldwide have been making progress <sup>(4)</sup> towards legal inclusion of LGBTIQ people and in fighting discrimination based on sexual orientation (OECD, 2020). Within the EU, the Charter on Fundamental Rights prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. Moreover, the European Commission adopted LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025 to address LGBTIQ discrimination more effectively. <sup>(5)</sup> However, discrimination against LGBTIQ people persists throughout the EU, and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights found that perceived discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation has actually increased in the EU between 2012 and 2019. In some Member States, this is accompanied by measures hindering the rights for LGBTIQ people. In Poland, several municipalities and regions had adopted resolutions on the creation of so-called 'LGBT-ideology-free zones' as of 2019. In Hungary, a law was enacted in 2021 laying down a number of restrictive and

discriminatory measures against LGBTIQ content. Cities are key for LGBTIQ inclusion, since LGBTIQ people are more likely to live in cities than in rural areas because of the higher degree of openness and tolerance (Stephan and McMullin, 1982; OECD, 2019).

Results from this survey show that around eight out of ten residents (76 %) consider their city to be a good place for LGBTIQ people to live. However, opinions differ between cities. In Zürich (CH), almost everyone considers it a good place, while in Diyarbakir (TR) only one out of five people think so. There is a large discrepancy between the EU (78 %), EFTA and the United Kingdom (89 %), on the one hand, and Türkiye and the western Balkans, on the other (38 %). Cities in eastern Member States tend to have a lower score (66 %), with a few even below 40 % in Poland and Romania (Map 4).

<sup>4</sup> The survey asked the question: is the city where you live a good place / not a good place for gay or lesbian people to live?

<sup>5</sup> COM(2020) 698 final on: Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025.

**Map 4: The city is a good place for LGBTIQ people to live****The city is a good place to live for LGBTIQ people**

The city where I live is a good place to live for gay or lesbian people: yes (%)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

National level results are below 50 % in five Member States <sup>(6)</sup>, primarily located in eastern Member States <sup>(7)</sup>. On average, the share of city residents who think their city is a good place for LGBTIQ people to live is 7 pp higher than the national average. The largest difference is found in Poland, where the cities of Gdańsk (PL, 85 %) and Kraków (PL, 79 %) have much higher scores compared to Poland's national rate (38 %). Similarly, in Romania the cities of Bucharest (RO, 60 %) and Cluj-Napoca (RO, 58 %) have significantly higher scores than the national average (22 %). On the other hand, in Verona (IT), at 62 %, the percentage of those who think the city is a good place to live for LGBTIQ people lies significantly below the Italian average (77 %). Of the 83 cities, 42 have a higher share than the

national level <sup>(8)</sup>, which confirms the role of cities as places of integration and tolerance.

Switzerland has some of the highest scores of residents agreeing their city is a good place for LGBTIQ people to live, with shares above 91 % for the Swiss cities included, namely Geneva and Zürich. Similarly in Spain, the shares above 86 % for all Spanish cities included (i.e. Barcelona, Madrid, Málaga and Oviedo) indicate that residents agree that their city is a good place for LGBTIQ people to live. On the other hand, residents' opinions seem to vary considerably in Italy and Greece, with a gap of about 29 pp between Bologna (IT, 91 %) and Verona (IT, 62 %) and between Athens (EL, 70 %) and

<sup>6</sup> Romania (21 %), Bulgaria (35 %), Croatia (36 %), Poland (38 %) and Slovakia (40 %).

<sup>7</sup> Source: Gallup World Poll 2022; question: 'Is the city or area where you live a good place or not a good place to live for gay or lesbian people?'

<sup>8</sup> At least 3 pp.

Heraklion (EL, 42 %), respectively. In Poland, Gdańsk (85 %) and Białystok (35 %) are even further apart, with a gap of 50 pp.

Confirming regional patterns, top-performing cities are found either in northern and western Member States or in the EFTA

countries (Table 4). In the bottom 10 cities, less than half the people think that their city is a good place for LGBTIQ people to live. In the cities of Diyarbakir (TR, 27 %) and Tirana (AL, 29 %) the share is below 30 %.

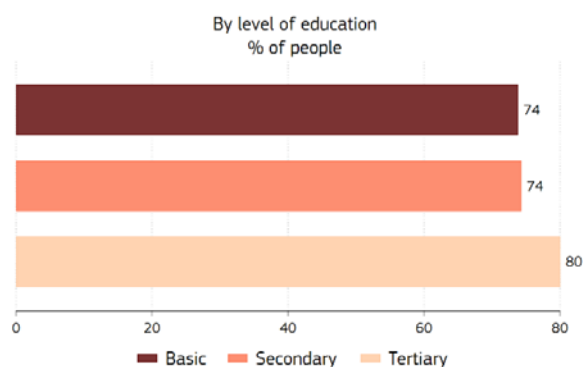
**Table 4:** The city is a good place for LGBTIQ people to live, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Zürich (CH)	96 %	Diyarbakir (TR)	27 %
Reykjavik (IS)	95 %	Tirana (AL)	29 %
Copenhagen (DK)	94 %	Istanbul (TR)	34 %
Munich (DE)	93 %	Ankara (TR)	35 %
Groningen (NL)	93 %	Białystok (PL)	35 %
Cardiff (UK)	93 %	Piatra Neamț (RO)	35 %
Stockholm (SE)	92 %	Podgorica (ME)	37 %
Oslo (NO)	92 %	Skopje (MK)	38 %
Oulu (FI)	92 %	Heraklion (EL)	42 %
Valletta (MT)	91 %	Belgrade (RS)	53 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

**Figure 7:** The city is a good place for LGBTIQ people to live, by level of education



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Residents' opinions are linked to education. In general, the higher the education level attained, the more likely a person is to consider their city a good place for LGBTIQ people to live. For example, those with only a basic education agree less (74 %) than those with tertiary education (80 %) (Figure 7).

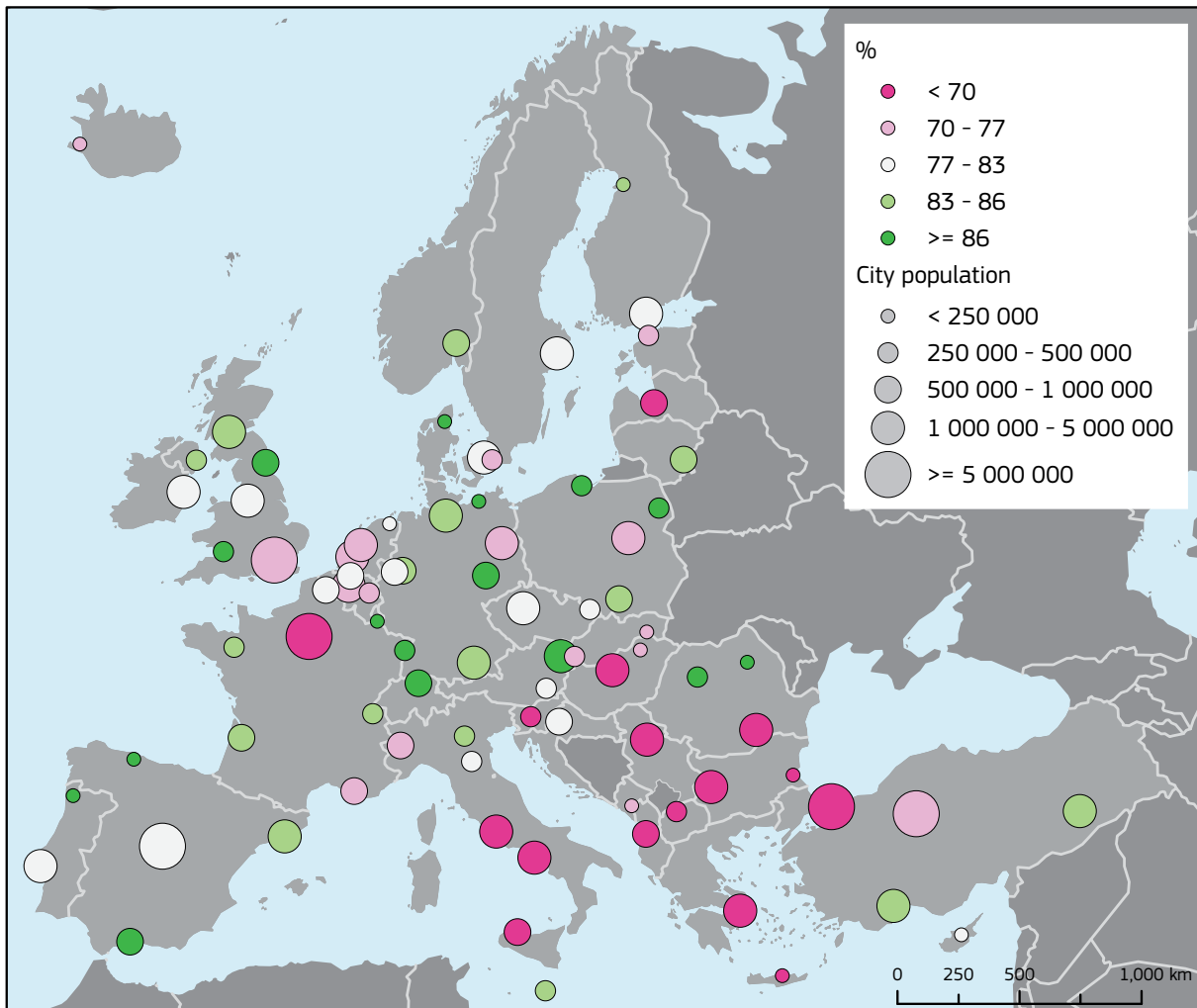
### Smaller cities seen as more aging friendly

An inclusive city should be an attractive place for older residents to live. This is becoming increasingly important as people in the EU live longer and a larger share of the population

is now aged 65 or older. In fact, in the EU, the share of people aged 65 and older grew from 18 % in 2012 to 21 % in 2022. It is projected to increase to 24 % by 2030 and even to 29 % by 2050<sup>9</sup>). Developing 'age-friendly cities' has recently become a major area of work and research in the field of urban planning (van Hoof et al., 2021).

On average, eight out of ten residents (78 %) agree that their city is a good place for older people to live. Generally speaking, cities in western (81 %) and northern (82 %) Member States have a slightly higher level of agreement compared to eastern (76 %) and southern (75 %) Member States. Outside the EU, there is a big difference between the cities in the EFTA countries and the United Kingdom (84 %) compared to those in Türkiye (71 %) and the western Balkans (61 %) (Map 5).

<sup>9</sup> Source: Eurostat (proj\_23np).

**Map 5: The city is a good place for older people to live****The city is a good place to live for older people**

The city where I live is a good place to live for older people: yes (%)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Despite these broad regional patterns, several outliers have emerged. For example, London (UK) has a lower share of residents (73 %) agreeing that their city is a good place to live for older people than the EFTA and UK cities as a whole (84 %). Similarly, the cities of Paris (FR, 64 %), Amsterdam (NL, 71 %) and Marseille (FR, 72 %) present relatively low levels of agreement compared to the western Member States (81 %). On the other hand, some cities score much better than their cities' average in the region. For example, Piatra Neamț (RO, 95 %) and Białystok (PL, 93 %) score higher than the average eastern-Member-State city (76 %) while Málaga (ES, 93 %), Oviedo (ES, 92 %) and Braga (PT, 91 %) score higher than the average southern-Member-State city (75 %).

Cities within the same country can produce very different scores. Türkiye has the widest gap between its best and worst city (46 pp) followed by Italy (30 pp) and Romania (26 pp). In general, fewer people in capital cities think it is a good place for older people compared to the other cities in the country (73 % versus 82 %). The size of the city's population also plays a role. On average, 83 % of residents in cities with less than 250 000 inhabitants think their city is a good place for older residents, compared to 75 % in cities with between 1 and 5 million inhabitants.



**Table 5:** The city is a good place for older people to live, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Zürich (CH)	95 %	Istanbul (TR)	39 %
Rostock (DE)	95 %	Rome (IT)	47 %
Luxembourg (LU)	95 %	Tirana (AL)	52 %
Piatra Neamț (RO)	95 %	Athens (EL)	52 %
Aalborg (DK)	94 %	Ljubljana (SI)	54 %
Málaga (ES)	93 %	Naples (IT)	55 %
Białystok (PL)	93 %	Sofia (BG)	56 %
Oviedo (ES)	92 %	Palermo (IT)	58 %
Braga (PT)	91 %	Skopje (MK)	60 %
Strasbourg (FR)	91 %	Belgrade (RS)	60 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

Looking at the city ranking, almost all residents in Zürich (CH, 95 %), Rostock (DE, 95 %), Luxembourg (LU, 95 %) and Piatra Neamț (RO, 95 %) consider their city to be a good place for older people to live. At the other end of the distribution, less than half the residents in the two bottom cities (i.e. Istanbul (TR) 39 % and Rome (IT) 47 %) think their city is a good place for the older people to live (Table 5).

### Non-capital cities seen as better for families with young children

Inclusive cities should also be attractive places for families with young children to live.

About eight out of ten residents (81 %) think their city is a good place for families with young children to live, which is about the same share as for older adults. Cities in the western Balkans and Türkiye have the lowest shares (65 % and 74 %, respectively), while those in the EFTA countries and the United Kingdom have the highest shares (87 %). The variation between the different regions within the EU is small, with the indicator

ranging between 80 % in southern Member States and 86 % in northern Member States.

In Cardiff (UK), Oulu (FI), Braga (PT) and Leipzig (DE) at least 95 % of residents think that their city is a good place for families with young children to live. Overall, in 20 cities, nine or more residents out of ten believe that their city is a good place for families. In contrast, Istanbul (TR, 42 %), Tirana (AL, 52 %), Ljubljana (SI, 57 %), Naples (IT, 58 %) and Palermo (IT, 59 %) are in the bottom of the distribution (Table 6).

**Table 6:** The city is a good place for families with young children to live, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Cardiff (UK)	96%	Istanbul (TR)	42%
Oulu (FI)	95%	Tirana (AL)	52%
Braga (PT)	95%	Ljubljana (SI)	57%
Leipzig (DE)	95%	Naples (IT)	58%
Gdańsk (PL)	93%	Palermo (IT)	59%
Rostock (DE)	93%	Skopje (MK)	60%
Aalborg (DK)	92%	Athens (EL)	61%
Rennes (FR)	92%	Rome (IT)	62%
Geneva (CH)	92%	Sofia (BG)	62%
Piatra Neamț (RO)	92%	Amsterdam (NL)	67%

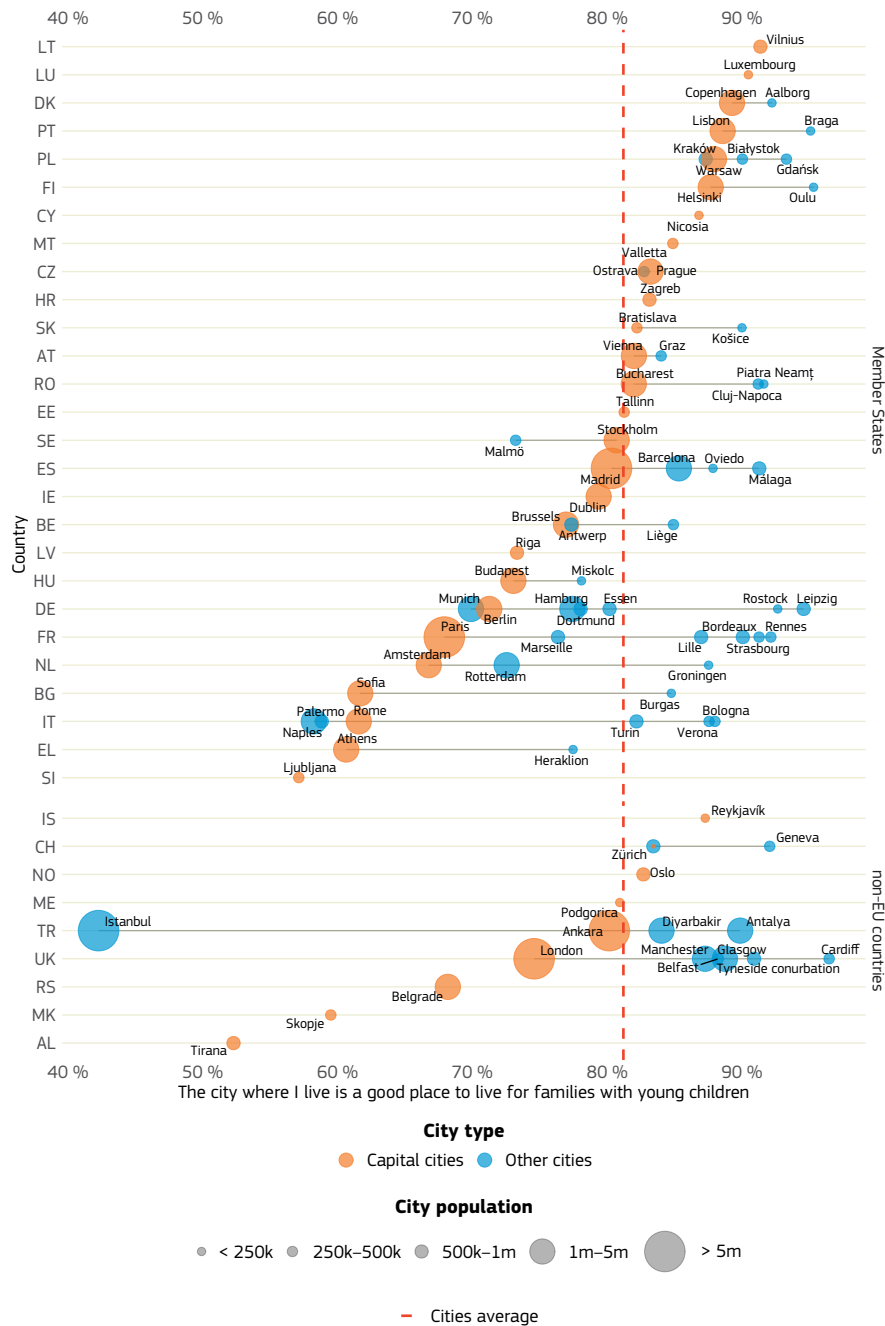
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

Non-capital cities are seen as better for families with young children than capital cities. In the former group, 84 % of residents consider their city to be a good place for families against 77 % of those living in capital cities. This pattern holds for the vast majority of countries where both capital and non-capital cities were surveyed (Figure 8). For example, in the Netherlands, in Amsterdam, the value of the indicator is 67 %

but increases to 73 % in Rotterdam and 88 % in Groningen. In Paris, 68 % believe that the city is good for families while the percentage of residents from Rennes, Bordeaux and Strasbourg agreeing with this statement is above 90 %. Similarly, there are substantial differences between capital and non-capital cities in Spain, the United Kingdom and Türkiye.

Figure 8: The city is a good place for families with young children to live, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

The larger the city, the fewer the people who think it is a good place for families with young children. While in cities with 250 000 inhabitants or less, 88 % of the residents think their city is a good place for these families; this drops to 77 % for cities with between 1 and 5 million inhabitants.

Intra-country variation is noticeable, particularly in Türkiye, Germany, Italy and France. Istanbul (TR) is the worst-performing city while Diyarbakir (TR) ranks among the 20 best cities for young families with children. The rate of agreement is 30 pp higher in Verona (IT, 88 %) than in Naples (IT, 58 %). Similarly, Munich (DE, 70 %) has the lowest share in Germany, while in Leipzig (DE), almost all residents (95 %) feel they live in a city suitable for families with young children.

There are no big differences across gender, age groups, educational attainment or family type in the way residents assess the suitability of their city for families with young children. A slightly lower share of the unemployed (78 %) believe their city is a good place for families compared to their full- or part-time employed counterparts (81 % and 80 %, respectively).

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## Chapter 2: A safe and cohesive city

Safe and cohesive urban areas are essential for the development of prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable societies. This is outlined in the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development. The New Urban Agenda likewise provides a framework for sustainable urbanisation and a roadmap to establish more liveable, inclusive and resilient cities. In particular it stresses that cities should ‘prioritize safe, inclusive, accessible [...] and foster social cohesion, inclusion and safety in peaceful and pluralistic societies. The European Union has committed to carrying out this agenda <sup>(10)</sup>.

Building cohesive, inclusive and safe cities also involves combating loneliness. Loneliness goes beyond personal concerns and has emerged as a pressing societal issue, prompting its inclusion on the European political agenda <sup>(11)</sup>.

This chapter includes two sections. The first focuses on safety and trust. The second discusses and compares loneliness prevalence across cities, first measured in 2023 by the survey.

### Safety and trust in European cities

People who feel safe and say that most people can be trusted also tend to be more satisfied with their life. Trust can help create stronger social ties, which facilitate cooperation and happiness (Glatz and Eder, 2019; Helliwell and Putnam, 2004; Rodríguez-Pose and von Berlepsch, 2014). Individuals who have experienced crime or fear crime tend to engage less in outdoor activities and to report higher levels of distress and lower levels of well-being (Hanslmaier, 2013; Brereton et al., 2008; Denkers and Winkel, 1998).

#### More people feel safe in smaller cities

Safety perception is measured by the share of respondents agreeing with the statement: ‘I feel safe walking alone at night in my city.’ Seven out of ten residents feel safe walking alone in their city at night. In the top 10 cities, more than 82 % of residents feel safe (Table 7). In the bottom 10 cities, however, less than half of the residents feel safe.

**Table 7:** People feeling safe walking alone at night in the city, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Copenhagen (DK)	87 %	Rome (IT)	38 %
Oviedo (ES)	87 %	Athens (EL)	40 %
Ljubljana (SI)	87 %	Marseille (FR)	43 %
Białystok (PL)	86 %	Naples (IT)	44 %
Groningen (NL)	86 %	Liège (BE)	44 %
Zürich (CH)	86 %	Istanbul (TR)	44 %
Aalborg (DK)	85 %	Ostrava (CZ)	45 %
Braga (PT)	84 %	Miskolc (HU)	48 %
Luxembourg (LU)	83 %	Sofia (BG)	48 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding ‘don’t know’ / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

The cities in southern Member States lag behind, with 63 % of residents feeling safe, which is 19 pp below cities in northern Member States (Map 6). However, two out of the ten best-performing cities are in southern Member States (Oviedo (ES), Braga (PT)), but three cities in southern Member States simultaneously rank in the bottom 10 (Rome (IT), Athens (EL), Naples (IT)). In the cities in western and eastern Member States, the share of residents feeling safe amounts to 69 %. Finally, cities from the United Kingdom and EFTA (73 %) display numbers of residents feeling safe when walking at night different to those observed in northern Member States (82 %), mainly due to low scores in UK cities. Cities in the western Balkans (68 %) and Türkiye (67 %) show figures comparable to those of eastern Member States.

However, quite a few cities deviate from these regional trends. Oviedo (ES), Braga (PT) and Málaga (ES) all have a high share of residents who feel safe (80 % or more), well above the average of cities in southern Member States. Ljubljana (SI), Białystok (PL), Gdańsk (PL) or Cluj-Napoca (RO) also score much higher than the eastern-Member-State cities. Marseille (FR) and Liège (BE), on the other hand, score well below the western-Member-State cities’ average.

Within some countries, feeling safe differs substantially between cities (Map 6). In France, for instance, the share of residents reporting that they feel safe walking at night ranges from 43 % in Marseille to 82 % in Bordeaux. Significant differences across cities within the same country are also found in Belgium (Liège 44 %, Antwerp 73 %), Bulgaria (Sofia 48 %,

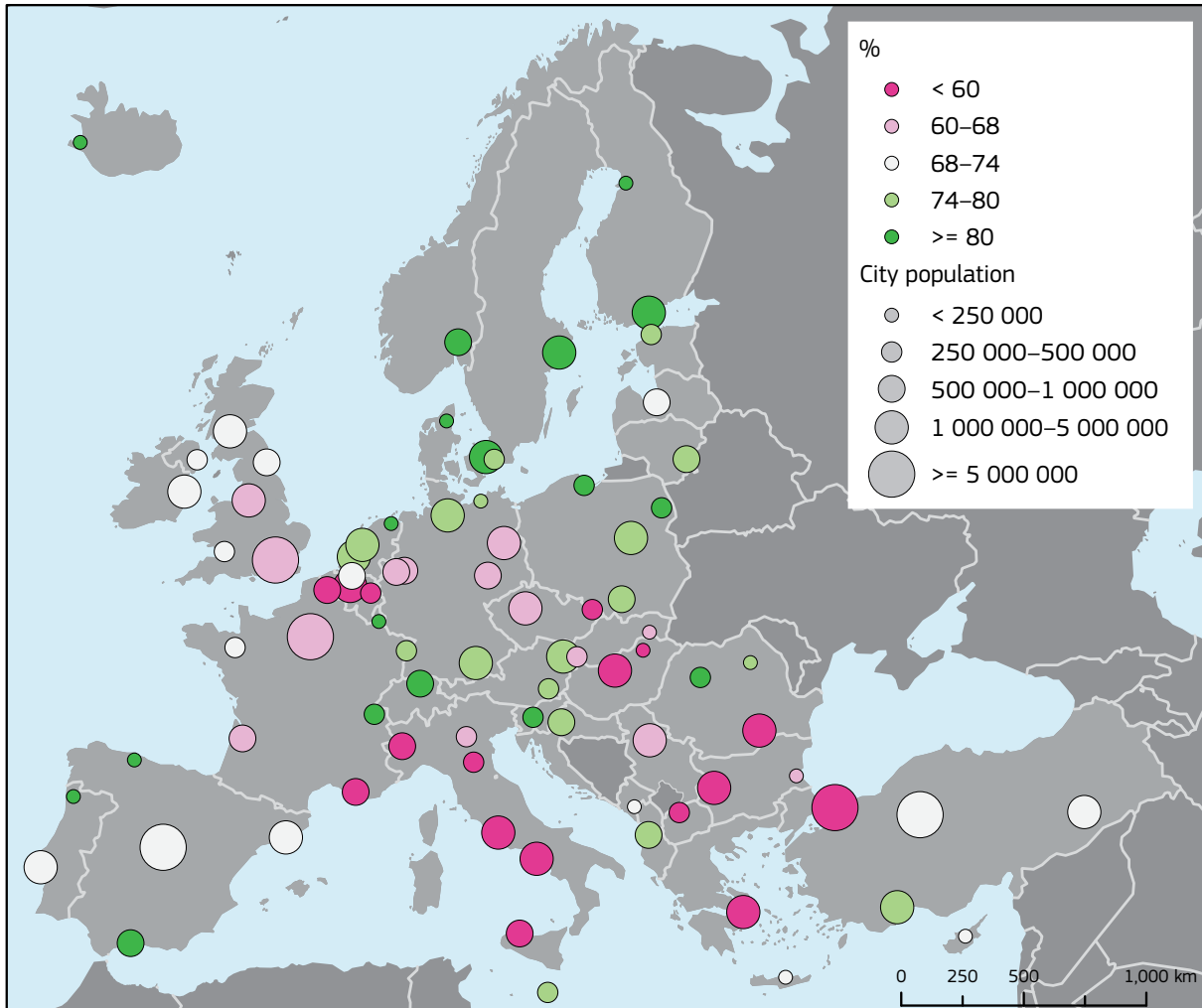
<sup>10</sup> SWD (2020) 400 final, Commission Staff Working Document on Delivering on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals – A comprehensive approach.

<sup>11</sup> See [Loneliness \(europea.eu\)](https://europea.eu) for a description of the European Parliament pilot project on loneliness. The 2023 Communication on Mental Health (COM(2023) 298) and the 2022 care strategy for caregivers and care receivers (COM/2022/440) stress the importance of tackling loneliness in Europe.

Burgas 66 %), Czechia (Ostrava 45 %, Prague 62 %), Greece (Athens 40 %, Heraklion 68 %), Italy (Rome 37 %, Verona 64 %), Romania (Bucharest 58 %, Cluj-Napoca 80 %) and Türkiye (Istanbul 44 %, Antalya 80 %). In contrast, the

differences between the cities within Denmark, Austria, Slovakia, Finland, the United Kingdom and Switzerland are small.

**Map 6:** People feeling safe walking alone at night in the city



### Safety in the city

I feel safe walking alone at night in the city: total agree (%)

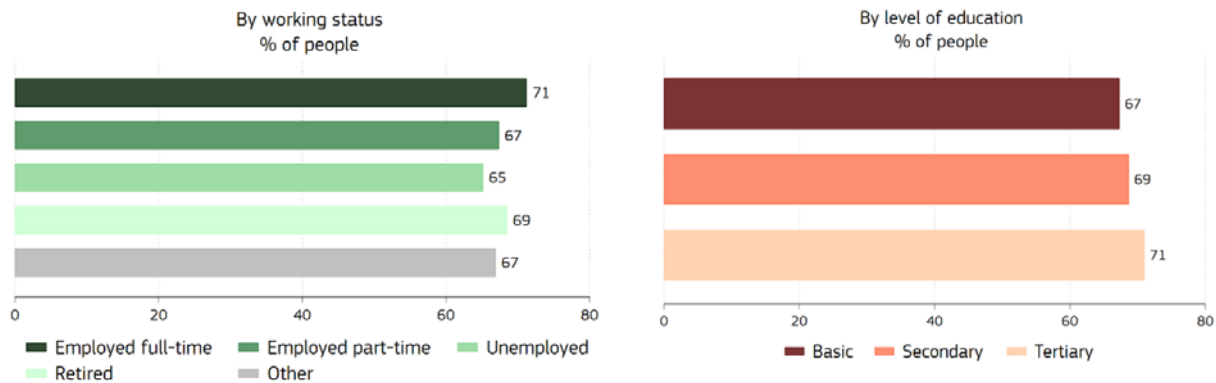
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

More people feel safer in smaller cities. In cities with less than 250 000 inhabitants, 75 % of the residents feel safe compared to only 67 % in cities with between 1 and 5 million inhabitants. In line with this, overall, the safety rate across the cities in the 2023 'Quality of life' survey is lower to that observed at the national level, with an average difference of - 9 pp<sup>12</sup>. In some countries, however, the scores at the city level are slightly higher than the national one: Albania, Croatia, Malta and Poland. In contrast, in Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary and Portugal, the scores at the city level are much lower than at the national level.

Women are less likely to feel safe in the city than men (67 % versus 72 %). Similarly, residents aged 55 and over, along with those who are unemployed, are less likely to feel safe compared to their counterparts (younger generations and the full-time employed, respectively). Education also correlates positively with perceived safety, with 71 % of tertiary educated residents stating that they feel safe in the city at night, against only 67 % of residents with basic education (Figure 9). This result is in line with the existing literature on this topic (Mason et al., 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Source: Gallup World Poll 2022; question: 'Do you feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live?'.

**Figure 9:** People feeling safe walking alone at night in the city, by socio-demographic groups



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

**Can most people in your city be trusted?**

Trust in others reduces transaction costs and fosters social networks and integration. Among psychological theories, social trust is also seen as a prerequisite for human needs (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Cities and neighbourhoods serve as local contexts where individuals can engage in social interactions, the quality of which plays a pivotal role in fostering mutual trust and facilitating collaborative efforts towards common well-being (Ziller and Andreß, 2022). Below, social trust is measured by asking residents: 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people in your city can be trusted?'

Six out of ten city residents trust the people who live in their city. The share of residents who trust people varies between 29 % (Istanbul, TR) and 88 % (Aalborg, DK). In the top 10 cities, between 81 % and 86 % of residents trust people in their city. In contrast, in the bottom 10, the shares range between 27 % and 42 % (Table 8). Overall, trust in the bottom 10 cities is between two and three times lower compared to the top 10 cities.

**Table 8:** People agreeing that most people in their city can be trusted, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Aalborg (DK)	87 %	Istanbul (TR)	27 %
Groningen (NL)	86 %	Athens (EL)	35 %
Copenhagen (DK)	86 %	Sofia (BG)	36 %
Rostock (DE)	85 %	Podgorica (ME)	37 %
Reykjavik (IS)	85 %	Miskolc (HU)	37 %
Oulu (FI)	84 %	Skopje (MK)	38 %
Zürich (CH)	83 %	Belgrade (RS)	38 %
Oslo (NO)	83 %	Tirana (AL)	41 %
Oviedo (ES)	82 %	Budapest (HU)	42 %
Munich (DE)	81 %	Marseille (FR)	42 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

Trust is the highest in EFTA and UK cities (76 %) and lowest in cities in the western Balkans (38 %) and Türkiye (54 %). Within the EU, northern Member States performs the best (81 %) and eastern Member States the worst (55 %), whereas western (69 %) and southern (63 %) Member States lie in between.

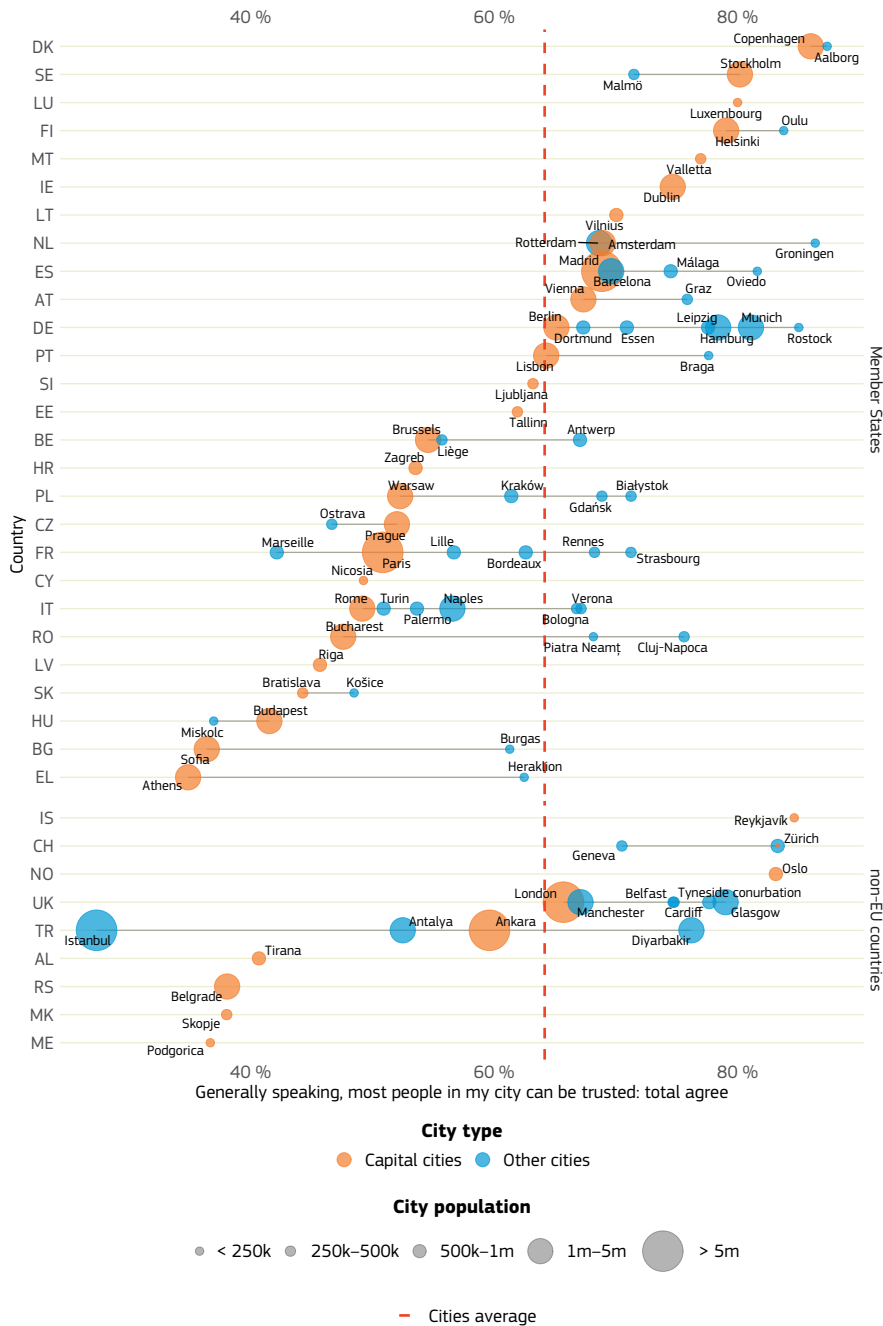
Some cities deviate from these regional patterns (Figure 10). For example, in Diyarbakir (TR), Białystok (PL) or Cluj-Napoca (RO), at least 74 % of residents trust people, which is much

higher than the average for cities in Türkiye or eastern Member States, respectively. In addition, all cities in Spain (Oviedo, Barcelona, Málaga and Madrid), along with Braga (PT) and Valletta (MT), exhibit high proportions (above 69 %) of residents reporting to trust the people living in their city compared to the average observed in cities in southern Member States. Conversely, trust scores in two out of six French cities are a lot lower (Marseille 42 % and Paris 51 %) than the average in cities in western Member States.

Cities from northern Member States display both high levels of trust and low variations between cities in the same country. In other countries, the difference between cities is more marked. In France, for instance, the level of trust varies between 42 % (Marseille) and 71 % (Strasbourg). Wide variations are also found in two eastern Member States – Bulgaria and

Romania – where the differences between the best-performing (Burgas, BG and Cluj-Napoca, RO) and worst-performing (Sofia, BG and Bucharest, RO) cities are 25 pp and 29 pp, respectively. Türkiye also exhibits large variations: 29 % in Istanbul versus 78 % in Diyarbakir.

Figure 10: People agreeing that most people in their city can be trusted, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

People living in capital cities are less likely to trust people (59 % versus 68 % in non-capital cities). The lower level of trust in capital cities is confirmed for almost all countries. For example, in Bulgaria, only 36 % of the residents of Sofia trust people compared to 61 % in Burgas. In Germany, 65 % of those living

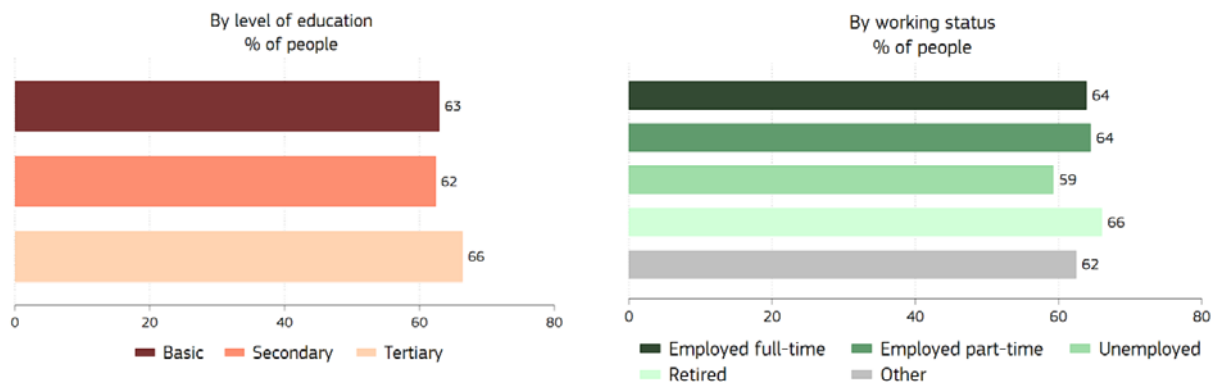
in Berlin trust people compared to 85 % in Rostock. Similarly, trust is generally lower in large cities. In cities with less than 250 000 inhabitants, 69 % of residents trust people in their city, compared to only 62 % in cities with between 1 and 5 million inhabitants.



Women and men show similar levels of trust (around 64 %). In contrast, 66 % of tertiary-educated residents trust the people living in their city, against 63 % of those with a basic education.

Similarly, the trust rate among unemployed is 59 % but rises to 66 % among retired people (Figure 11).

**Figure 11:** People agreeing that most people in their city can be trusted, by socio-demographic groups



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

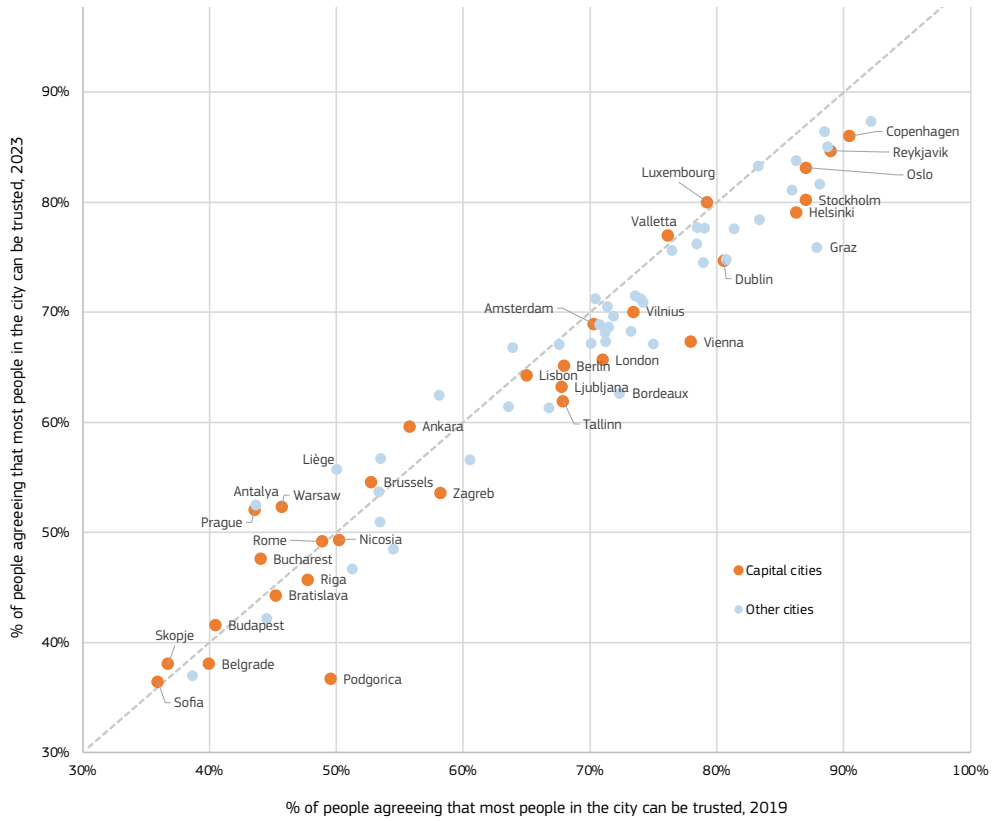
Of the 76 cities for which a time comparison between 2019 and 2023 is feasible <sup>13</sup>, the city rate of agreement that most people in the city can be trusted seems to have decreased for 57 of those cities (Figure 12). On average, the largest decline is registered in northern-Member-State cities (- 5 pp) and UK and EFTA cities (- 4 pp), compared to the overall average decline of - 2 pp. Along this line, Brück et al. (2020) report a negative correlation between exposure to the COVID-19 virus and interpersonal trust. Nevertheless, a substantial increase in trust

is found in Antalya (TR, + 9 pp), Prague (CZ, + 8 pp), Warsaw (PL, + 7 pp) and Liège (BE, + 6 pp), whereas the opposite is observed in Podgorica (ME, - 13 pp), Graz (AT, - 12 pp), Vienna (AT, - 11 pp) and Bordeaux (FR, - 10 pp).

Trust in people and feeling safe are positively correlated (Figure 13, correlation coefficient: 0.7): cities where trust is higher also display a larger share of people feeling safe walking at night.

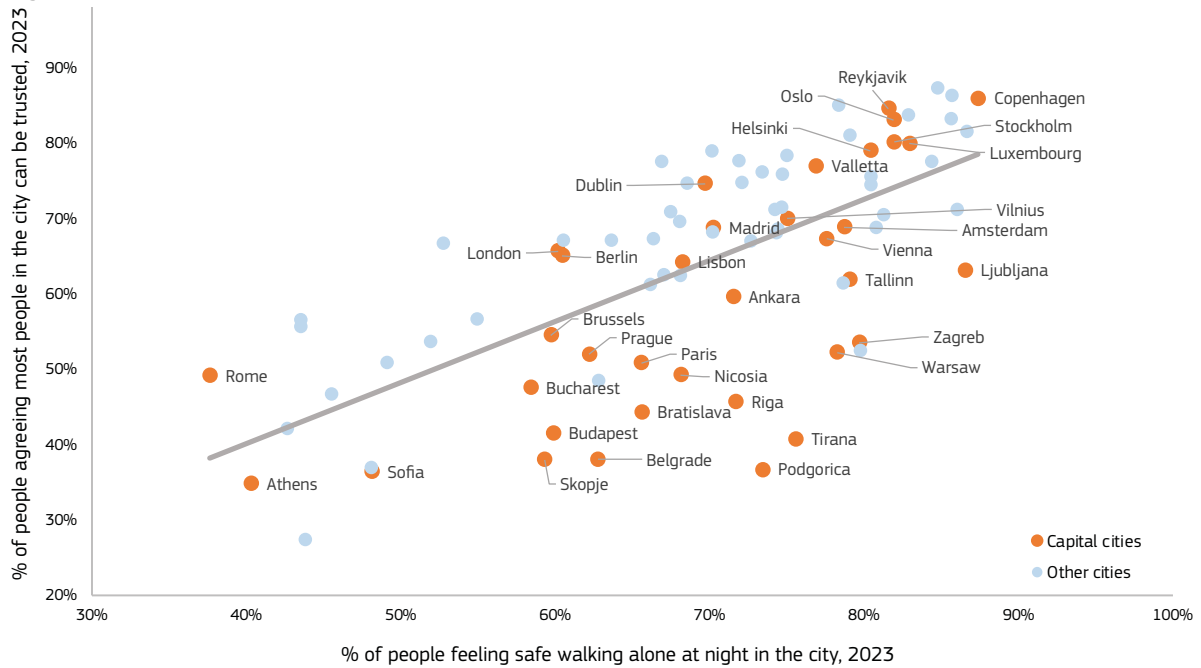
<sup>13</sup> For the list of cities for which a comparison is feasible, see page viii.

**Figure 12:** People agreeing that most people in their city can be trusted, comparison between 2019 and 2023



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2019 and 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). The dashed line is a 45-degree line (no change between 2019 and 2023). The chart only includes cities for which a time comparison can be made (see page 9).

**Figure 13:** People agreeing that most people in their city can be trusted versus perceived safety in the city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

## Loneliness in European cities

Existing evidence has underlined the role of loneliness in individual well-being<sup>(14)</sup>. The mortality risks associated with loneliness have been reported to be comparable to those of obesity and smoking (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). In addition, loneliness has been linked to many health problems, along with lower cognitive performance and engagement in risky behaviours (Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008). Loneliness has also been associated with lower societal cohesion (Hertz, 2020; Murthy, 2020). The difficulties posed by loneliness have gained attention in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions on social interaction (Baarck et al., 2022).

In the survey, respondents were asked how frequently they felt lonely over the past 4 weeks, with answer categories being 'all of the time', 'most of the time', 'some of the time', 'a little of the time' and 'none of the time'. In the following, the share of

respondents answering 'all of the time' or 'most of the time' are considered to be lonely<sup>(15)</sup>.

Nearly 13 % of the residents report that they felt lonely in the last 4 weeks. This proportion of lonely people is comparable to that observed in the 2022 EU loneliness survey (Berlingieri et al., 2023)<sup>(16)</sup>. In Diyarbakir (TR), Podgorica (ME), Sofia (BG) and Antalya (TR), loneliness prevalence oscillates between 21 % and 26 %. In contrast, in Luxembourg (LU) and Strasbourg (FR), this figure amounts to 4 % and 5 % respectively. In the 10 best performing cities, less than one person out of ten reports to have felt lonely all or most of the time over the past 4 weeks (see Table 9), whereas in the 10 worst-performing cities, between two and three people out of ten suffer from loneliness. Türkiye exhibits much higher loneliness rates (23 %) in comparison to the average in the EU, EFTA and the United Kingdom.

**Table 9:** People feeling lonely in the previous 4 weeks, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (lowest score first)		Bottom 10 (highest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Luxembourg (LU)	4%	Diyarbakir (TR)	26%
Strasbourg (FR)	5%	Podgorica (ME)	22%
Geneva (CH)	6%	Sofia (BG)	21%
Antwerp (BE)	7%	Antalya (TR)	21%
Liege (BE)	8%	Lille (FR)	20%
Zurich (CH)	8%	London (UK)	19%
Brussels (BE)	8%	Ankara (TR)	19%
Cluj-Napoca (RO)	8%	Istanbul (TR)	19%
Copenhagen (DK)	8%	Oviedo (ES)	19%
Heraklion (EL)	8%	Belfast (UK)	18%

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

Cities from the four EU macro regions show relatively comparable figures, with loneliness prevalence oscillating between 13 % (southern-Member-State cities) and 11 % (northern-Member State cities). However, a few cities deviate from these regional trends (Figure 14). Lille (FR) and Vienna (AT) have a share of lonely residents well above the average of western-Member-State cities, whereas this is the opposite for Strasbourg (FR), Luxembourg (LU) and Antwerp (BE). Similarly, Oviedo (ES), Naples (IT), Barcelona (ES) and Málaga (ES) register

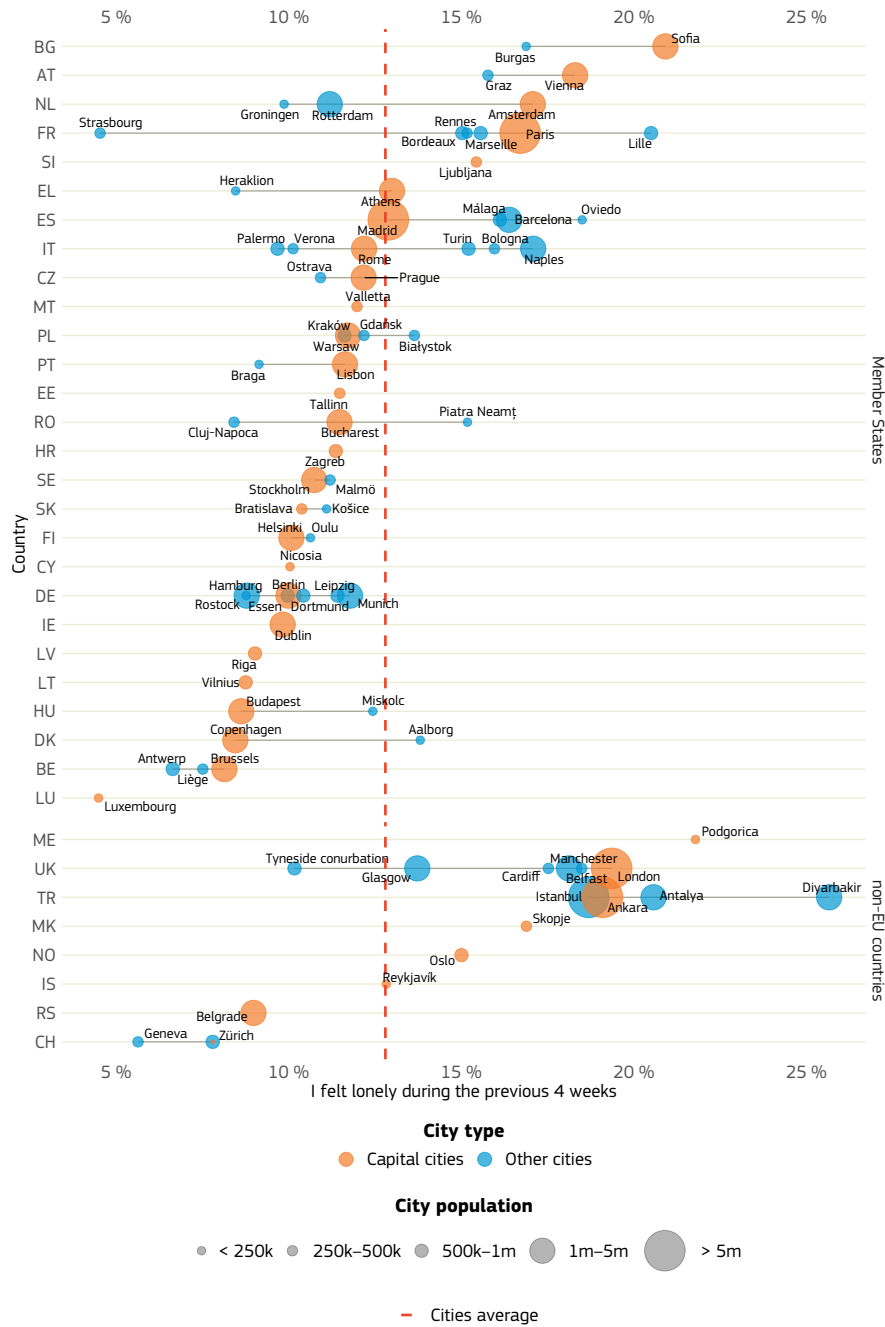
higher loneliness prevalence than the cities in southern Member States. In contrast, Vilnius (LT), Riga (LT) and Cluj-Napoca (RO) display lower loneliness levels than the eastern-Member-State city average. In some countries, the prevalence of loneliness varies greatly between cities. In France, for instance, the proportion of residents who report feeling lonely ranges from 5 % in Strasbourg to 20 % in Lille. Differences across cities in Poland and Spain, on the other hand, are lower.

<sup>14</sup> Loneliness is a subjective feeling referring to an unpleasant experience which derives from the low quality and / or quantity of a person's social network. Loneliness is thus not only about having too few social contacts per se but also about the perception that these relationships are not satisfying enough.

<sup>15</sup> Respondents were also asked how frequently they felt lonely over the past 12 months. The report only discusses findings based on the frequency of loneliness experienced within the preceding 4 weeks, as the two indicators of loneliness exhibit a strong correlation (0.9).

<sup>16</sup> In 2022 the European Commission, in collaboration with the European Parliament, carried out the first ever EU-wide survey fully dedicated to loneliness. See Berlingieri et al. (2023) for additional information.

Figure 14: People feeling lonely in the previous 4 weeks, by city



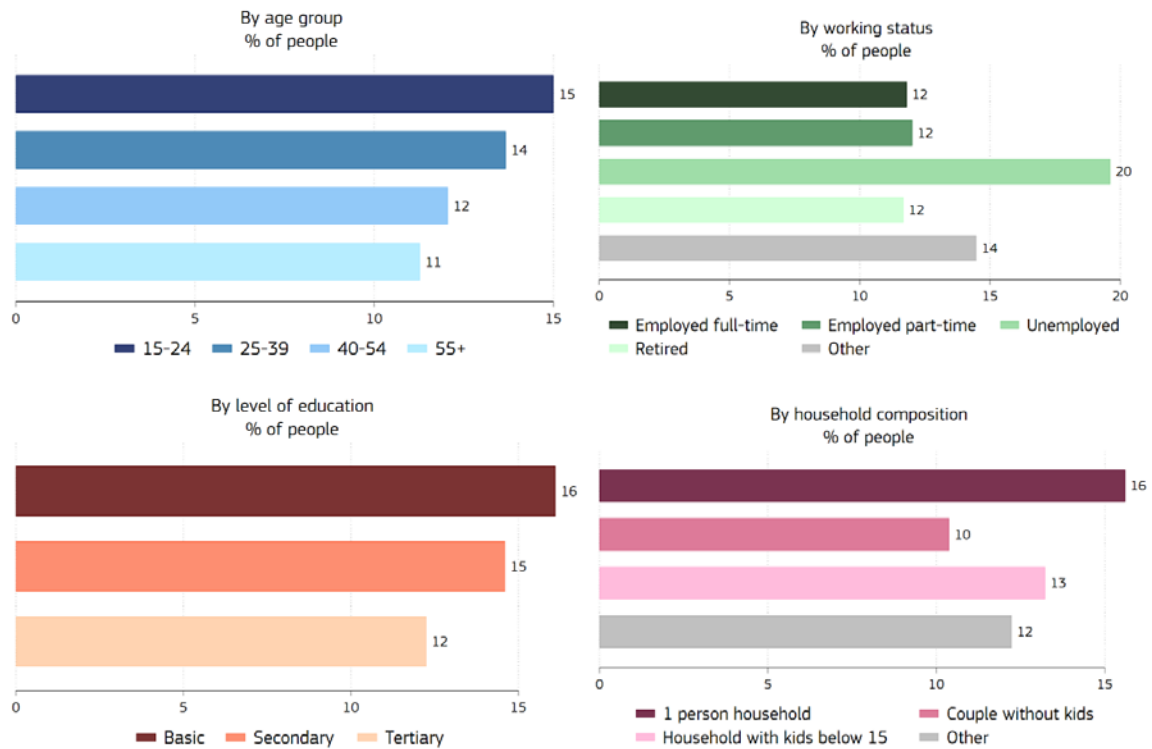
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Loneliness prevalence in cities is generally lower than the national value. Luxembourg (LU) and Dublin (IE) are two extreme cases with loneliness rates at 4 % and 10 % respectively, whereas the corresponding national figures amount to 17 % and 20 % according to the 2022 EU-wide survey on loneliness.

Young adults, at 15 %, are more likely to report feeling lonely than those aged 40-54 or older (12 % and 11 %, respectively). A recent EU-wide study on loneliness (Berlingieri et al., 2023) comes to similar conclusions: loneliness decreases with age.

Economic conditions are favourable safeguards against loneliness. In line with the existing evidence (Barjaková et al., 2023, Morrish et al., 2022), working status and household composition matter. Approximately 20 % of unemployed people report feeling lonely, compared to 12 % of full-time employees. Similarly, loneliness reduces with education. Furthermore, when compared to couples without children, single households are about 60 % more likely to feel lonely (Figure 15).

**Figure 15:** People feeling lonely in the previous 4 weeks, by socio-demographic groups



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Loneliness correlates strongly with perceived non-material social support (Figure 16). The correlation is even stronger for population subgroups that are at a greater risk of loneliness, such as the unoccupied. Despite the fact that loneliness differs

from connectedness, social support is essential for preventing or reducing feelings of loneliness. This finding is in line with the existing literature (Barjaková et al., 2023).

**Figure 16:** People feeling lonely in the previous 4 weeks versus perceived non-material social support



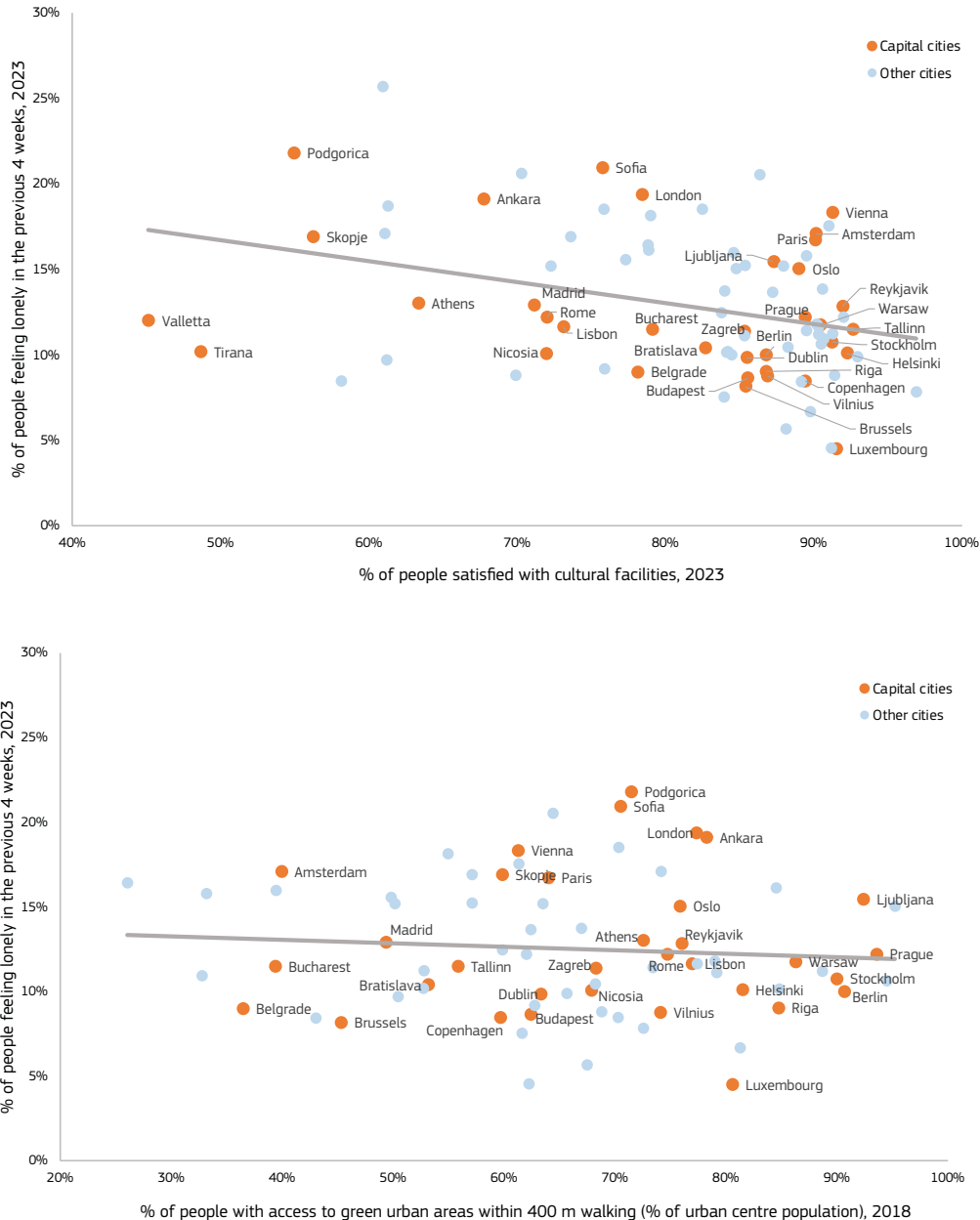
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Bringing people together through urban design and social infrastructures may be a way to address a variety of social and health problems, including loneliness. The role of built environments – including green spaces, cultural facilities and shared spaces – in mitigating or alleviating feelings of loneliness has indeed been discussed in previous studies (Barjaková et al., 2023; Astell-Burt et al., 2022). The data

suggest that the correlation between access to green urban areas within 400 meters of walking is mildly negative, yet this negative association becomes stronger when focusing on the sample of retired respondents (17). Similarly, satisfaction with cultural facilities is associated with decreased shares of loneliness (Figure 17) (18).

**Figure 17:** People feeling lonely in the previous 4 weeks versus access to green urban areas and satisfaction with cultural facilities



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*; DG Regional and Urban Policy, data based on Copernicus Urban Atlas 2018, TomTom and JRC-GEOSTAT 2018 data.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

17. More specifically, the data on accessibility measures the share of population of the urban centres (high-density cluster) that, in 2018, had access to green urban areas within 400 meters walking. The indicator covers 74 of the cities available in the survey.  
 18. Further investigation is needed to understand the relationship between loneliness and built environment. This is because access to green spaces suffers from measurement issues, while there may be a bidirectional relationship between loneliness and satisfaction with cultural facilities.

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## Chapter 3: Job situation, finding a house and earning a living

Finding a job and a house and making ends meet are key to a high quality of life. In this chapter, we explore whether it is easy to get a job, find a house and cover your expenses in the cities in the survey.

### It is not easy to find a job in cities in southern Member States

Cities are centres of employment (Eurostat, 2022). They provide work for people living in the city and for many people

**Table 10:** People who think it is easy to find a good job in the city, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Prague (CZ)	79 %	Palermo (IT)	4 %
Cluj-Napoca (RO)	73 %	Naples (IT)	11 %
Munich (DE)	72 %	Oviedo (ES)	16 %
Bratislava (SK)	72 %	Turin (IT)	19 %
Hamburg (DE)	71 %	Rome (IT)	20 %
Oslo (NO)	69 %	Málaga (ES)	21 %
Stockholm (SE)	68 %	Athens (EL)	21 %
Warsaw (PL)	66 %	Miskolc (HU)	23 %
Sofia (BG)	65 %	Barcelona (ES)	24 %
Tallinn (EE)	65 %	Madrid (ES)	24 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

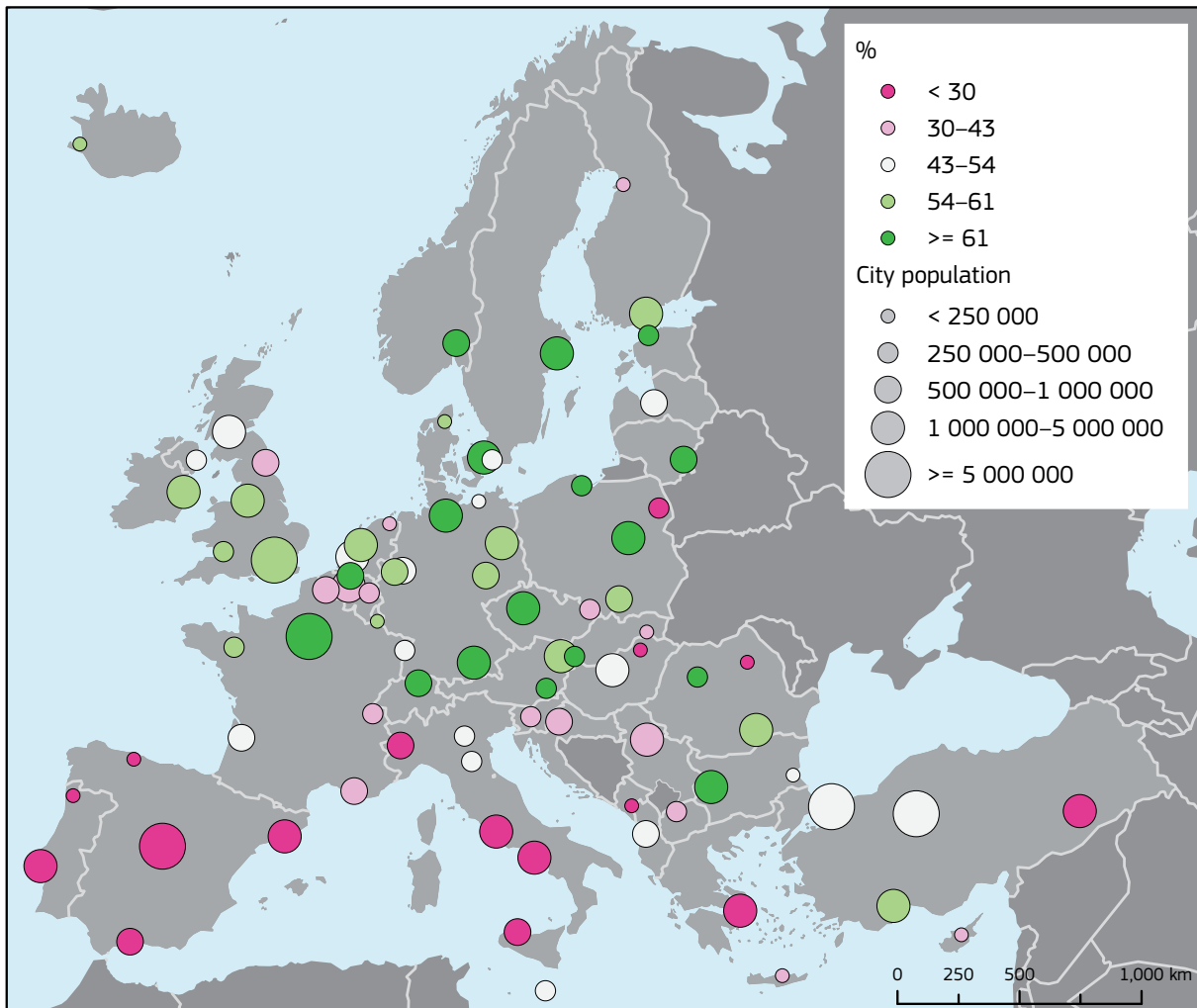
Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

Overall, only one in four people living in the cities in southern Member States in this survey thought it was easy to find a job compared to more than a half of people in cities in western and northern Member States (53 % and 55 %, respectively), and to half in cities in eastern Member States (Map 7). Outside of the

commuting into the city on a daily basis. The EU is experiencing labour shortages due to the strong market recovery in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with ongoing demographic trends (Eurofound, 2023). This has implications for cities, which host more specialised and highly paid jobs than rural areas. The difference between cities and rural areas is the type of jobs available, with more specialised and highly paid jobs in the former.

On average, only five out of ten city residents think it is easy to find a job in their city, although there are significant differences. For example, in Prague (CZ), four out of five people think it is easy, while in Palermo (IT) almost no one does (4 %, see Table 10).

EU, cities in the United Kingdom and EFTA states report a share of satisfied residents equal to 54 %, while in cities in the western Balkans and Türkiye just 38 % and 46 % of inhabitants, respectively, thought it was easy to find a job.

**Map 7: People who think it is easy to find a good job in the city****Job opportunities in the city**

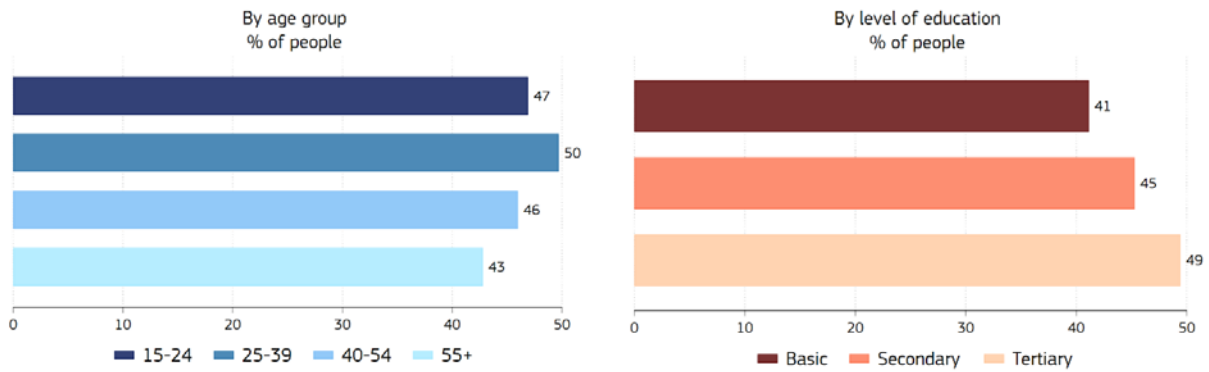
It is easy to find a good job in the city: total agree (%)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

In countries with more than one city in the survey, the capital tends to score better than the other cities, with the exception of Germany and Türkiye, underlining that the job market in these cities tends to be more dynamic (Eurofound and Joint Research Centre, 2019). In some countries, the indicator varies substantially between cities. For example, in Czechia, Slovakia and Poland, the capital cities have among the highest scores in the survey, while some of the other cities in the country score (much) lower. In Prague (CZ), 79 % of residents think it is easy

to find a job, while only 45 % think so in Ostrava (CZ). In Slovakia, the gap between the best-performing city, Bratislava (72 %), and the worst-performing, Košice (33 %), is 39 pp. In Poland, there is a similar gap between Warsaw (66 %) and Białystok (24 %). In Romania, the best-performing city is Cluj-Napoca (73 %) while the worst is Piatra Neamț (30 %). There are also large disparities among cities in Italy, Belgium, Hungary and Türkiye.

**Figure 18:** People thinking it is easy to find a good job in the city, by socio-demographic groups



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Cities are often characterised by a young and highly educated workforce (European Commission, 2016). On average, people aged 25 to 39 and those with tertiary education are most likely to say it is easy to find a job (Figure 18).

easy to find a good job in a city, more people are satisfied with living there, and vice versa <sup>(19)</sup>. This is generally true for all the cities, except for Tirana (AL) and Istanbul (TR) where people, in spite of considering that finding a good job relatively easy, are not really happy with their city.

As shown in Figure 19, good job opportunities and being satisfied with living in a city are linked: if more people think it is

**Figure 19:** People satisfied with living in the city versus people for whom it is easy to find a good job



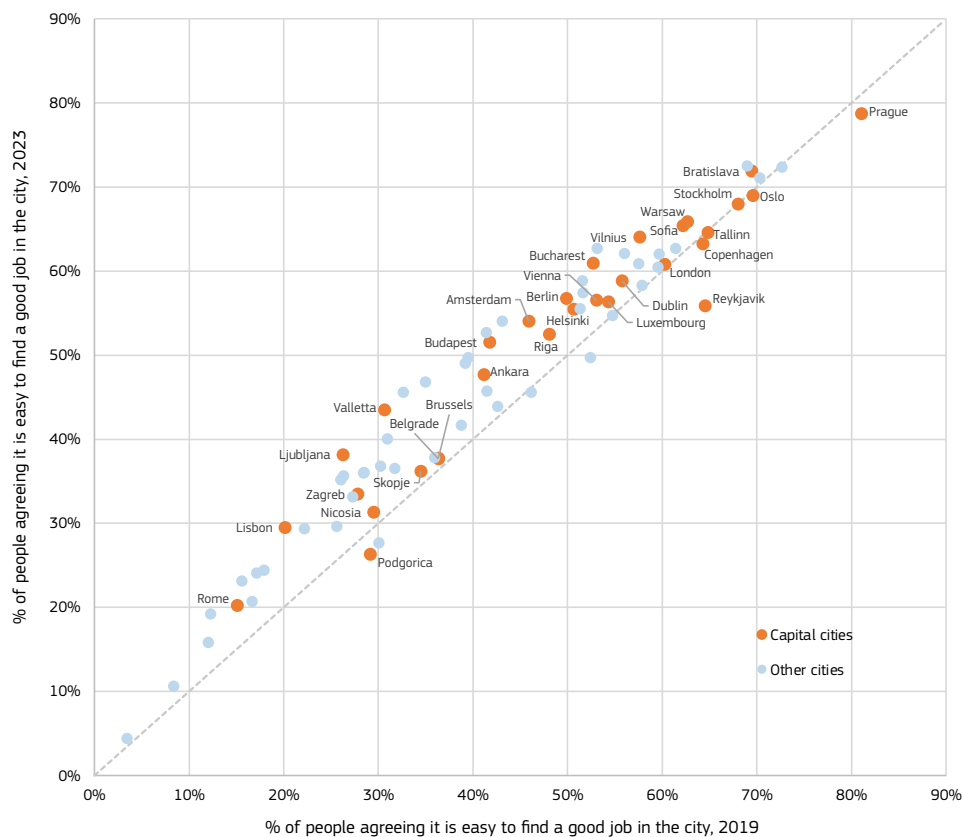
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

<sup>19</sup> The correlation between the two indicators is equal to 50 %.

Compared to 2019, for the 76 comparable cities <sup>(20)</sup>, on average, the share of people for which it is easy to find a good job in their city improved by 4 pp (Figure 20). In 10 cities, particularly the less performant in 2019, the share of people for which it is easy to find a good job in their city increased by at least 10 pp, and in 25 cities between 5 pp and 9 pp. The share decreased for only 8 cities. Among these only Reykjavik (IS) dropped by 9 pp, while the other eight dropped between 1 pp and 3 pp. Bologna (IT) and Valletta (MT) experienced the biggest improvement (13 pp), followed by Ljubljana (SI) and Verona (IT),

the shares of which both increased by 12 pp. Dortmund and Essen (DE) showed an improvement of 11 pp. Overall, the biggest improvement happened in cities in southern Member States (6 pp, from 20 % to 26 %), which still remain well below the European average. Cities in western and eastern Member States improved by 5 pp, from 47 % to 53 % and from 47 % to 52 %, respectively. Finally, the correlation between cities in the 2 years is 0.97, highlighting that the relative position did not change.

**Figure 20:** People agreeing it is easy to find a good job in the city, comparison between 2019 and 2023



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2019 and 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). The dashed line is a 45-degree line (no change between 2019 and 2023). The chart only includes cities for which a time comparison can be made (see page 9).

## Job satisfaction is high in most cities

Cities, in particular large cities and capital cities, tend to attract people from different parts of the country in search of employment (European Commission, 2016). They offer more employment opportunities and higher wages, both at the top and at the bottom of the wage spectrum (Moretti, 2010). Job satisfaction is a relevant component of subjective well-being (Bowling et al., 2010). The survey asked people with a job whether they are satisfied with their personal job situation. Three out of four residents said they were satisfied, both across

the overall sample of cities and in EU cities only (around 74 % for both). High levels of job satisfaction can be found in Rostock (DE), Luxembourg (LU) and Reykjavik (IS). Overall, cities in Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Austria, Czechia and Slovakia perform well. In contrast, within the EU, cities in Greece, Italy, Hungary and Spain score low. Outside the EU, cities in the western Balkans and Türkiye score low on job satisfaction (Map 8). Overall, capital cities do not perform better than non-capital cities (73 % vs 75 % satisfied), and differences within a country tend to be small. Only Italy and Türkiye have large intra-country variations <sup>(21)</sup>.

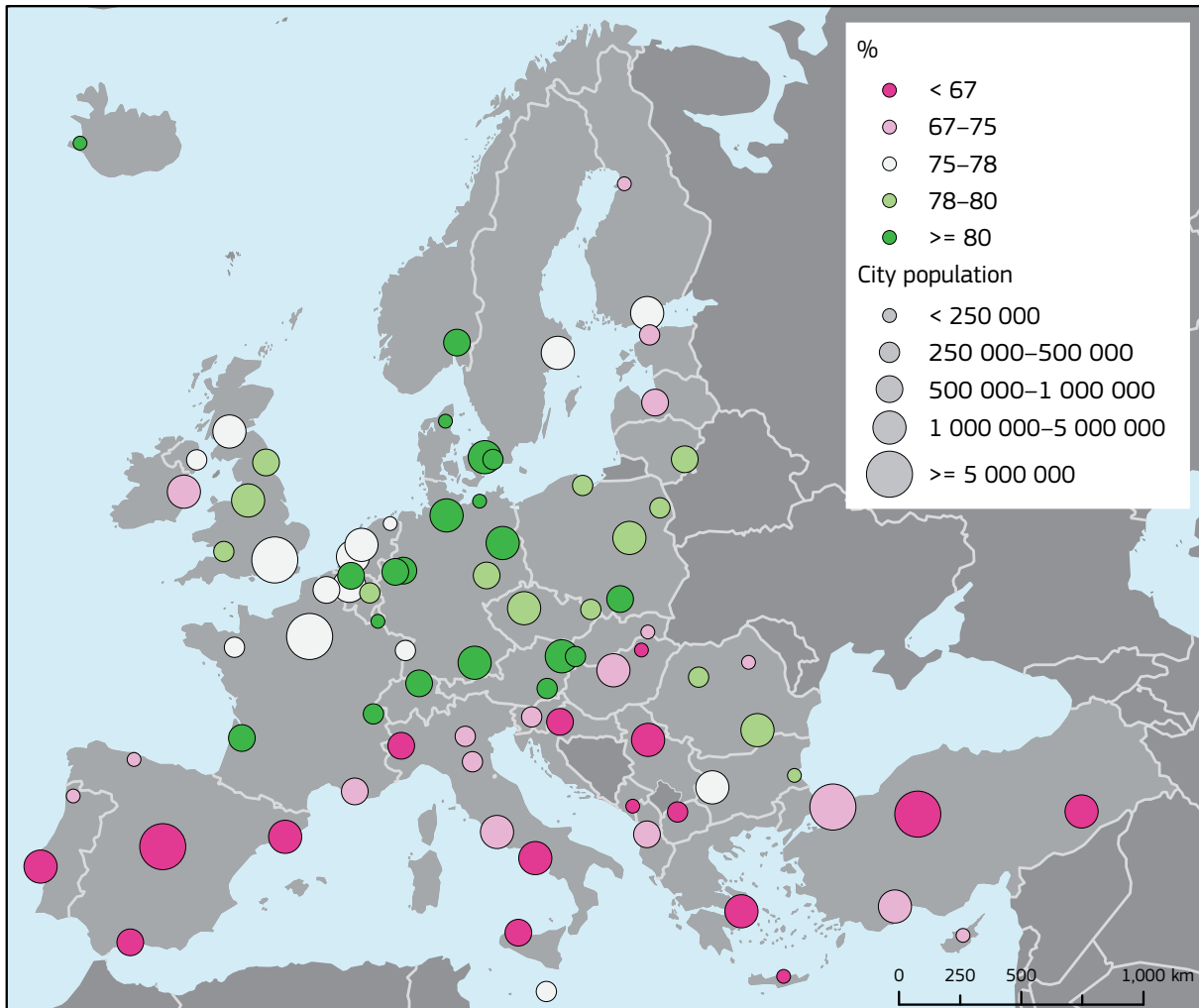
<sup>20</sup> For the list of cities for which a comparison is feasible, see page viii.

<sup>21</sup> In Italy the city with the highest score is Verona, where 75 % of respondents are satisfied with their personal job situation, against only 57 % in Palermo. In Türkiye, there is a difference of 19 pp between Antalya (73 %) and Diyarbakır (54 %).

The larger labour market in cities can help people find a job they really like. This may explain why the difference between the cities tends to be small and why cities consistently score better than rural areas (Burger et al., 2020). Interestingly, for this question the difference between 2019 and 2023 is, on average, just – 1 pp. Some cities, however, experienced a significant improvement. In Nicosia (CY) and Bologna (IT) the

share of people satisfied with their personal job situation increased by 7 pp and in Antalya (TR) by 6 pp. On the other hand, the situation of certain cities worsened: Valletta (MT) dropped by 10 pp and Košice (SK) by 8 pp. However, the relative position of the cities in 2019 compared to 2023 only slightly changed, as the correlation between the 2 years is 0.9.

**Map 8:** People satisfied with their personal job situation



### Satisfaction with own Job

Personal job situation: total satisfied (%)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

With almost nine out of ten respondents satisfied with their current job situation, Rostock (DE), closely followed by Luxembourg (LU) and Reykjavik (IS), are top ranked. Conversely, only around five out of ten residents said they were satisfied with their current job situation in Heraklion (EL) and Diyarbakir (TR) (Table 11).

**Table 11:** People satisfied with their personal job situation, top and bottom 10 scores

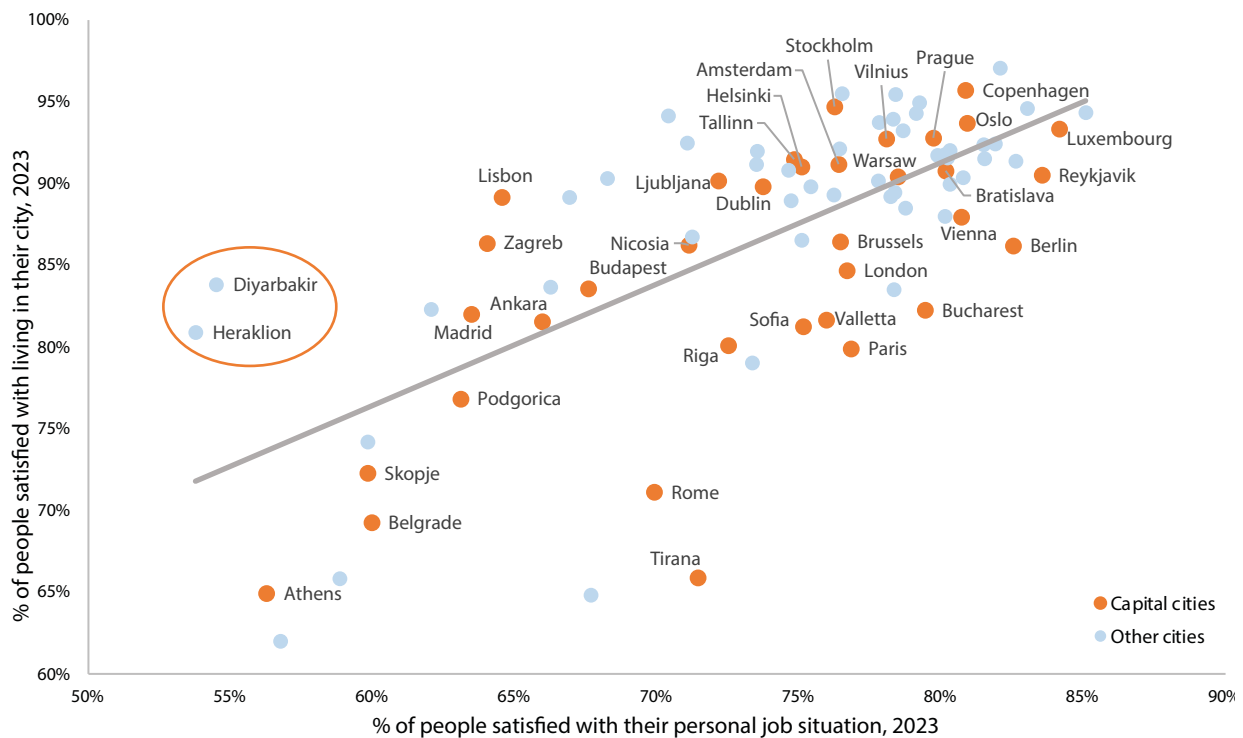
Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Rostock (DE)	85 %	Heraklion (EL)	54 %
Luxembourg (LU)	84 %	Diyarbakir (TR)	54 %
Reykjavik (IS)	84 %	Athens (EL)	56 %
Geneva (CH)	83 %	Palermo (IT)	57 %
Dortmund (DE)	83 %	Naples (IT)	59 %
Berlin (DE)	83 %	Skopje (MK)	60 %
Zürich (CH)	82 %	Miskolc (HU)	60 %
Aalborg (DK)	82 %	Belgrade (RS)	60 %
Malmö (SE)	82 %	Turin (IT)	62 %
Hamburg (DE)	81 %	Podgorica (ME)	63 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

A growing body of research suggests that people, in particular highly educated people or working age, move to cities which offer high-quality business environments, in search of better jobs (Chen and Rosenthal, 2008; Niedomysl and Hansen, 2010). Job satisfaction can therefore be an important component of satisfaction with living in the city and life satisfaction in

general. Nevertheless, the results from the survey show that for a handful of cities, city satisfaction does not go hand in hand with job satisfaction. This is true for Heraklion (EL) and Diyarbakir (TR), where more than 80 % of residents are satisfied with living in their city but less than 55 % are satisfied with their job situation (Figure 21).

**Figure 21:** People satisfied with living in the city versus people satisfied with their job



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Not surprisingly, across the whole sample, satisfaction with residents' current job increases with their education level (76 % of tertiary-educated residents against 71 % of residents with basic education). However, the situation slightly changed from

2019. Satisfaction with the current job decreased by 1 pp for tertiary-educated respondents and increased by 2 pp for those with basic education. At 77 %, full-time-employed residents are the most satisfied with their job situation, against 75 % for

part-time-employed residents, supporting the claim that in some cases part-time work is not the worker's personal choice <sup>(22)</sup>.

## In most capitals, it is hard to find good housing at a reasonable price

Living in an adequate housing context is fundamental because, as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2015) points out, housing is 'an integrative good, it is linked to many other sectors such as: health, economic security, energy security, transportation, education, employment. Housing also influences issues such as social cohesion and neighbourhood security [...]'.<sup>23</sup>

Across the EU, however, in 2022, around 9 % of the EU's population lived in households that were overburdened by housing costs, a value that goes up to around 11 % for those living in EU cities <sup>(23)</sup> <sup>(24)</sup>.

People living in cities in southern Member States and the western Balkan cities are more likely to report that it is easy to find good housing at a reasonable price than those living in cities in western and northern Member States, the western Balkans and EFTA countries. In virtually all the cities in southern Member States, at least 40 % of residents are positive about housing availability, quality and cost compared to less than 37 % in the other regions.

On average, around 34 % of city residents are positive about housing in their city. In one in six cities, this share is above 50 %, while in one in five cities it is below 20 % (Figure 22). A positive opinion of housing is significantly higher in non-capital cities (39 %) than in capitals (28 %).

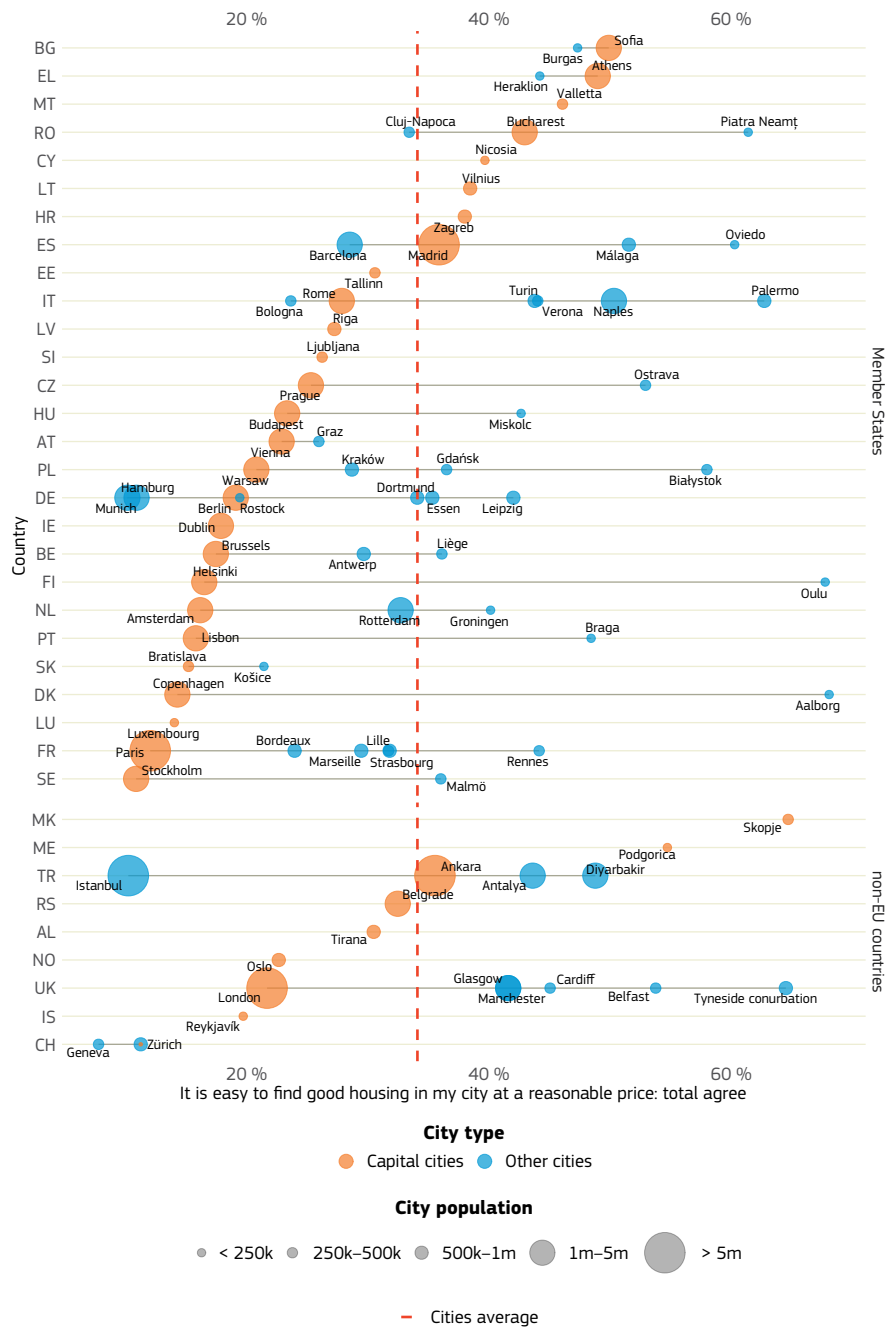
The degree of intra-country variability is very high and mainly due to poor scores in the capitals. The five countries with the biggest difference between their best- and worst-performing cities are Denmark (54 pp), Finland (51 pp), the United Kingdom (40 pp) and Italy (35 pp).

<sup>22</sup> Involuntary part-time work remains significant in Europe. In 2018, for instance, according to Eurostat data around 21 % of part-time workers declared they would like to work more.

<sup>23</sup> They spent 40 % or more of their equivalised disposable income on housing (Eurostat, 2021).

<sup>24</sup> The value was 6.7 % for those living in rural areas in the EU.

Figure 22: People agreeing it is easy to find good housing at a reasonable price in their city, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).



**Table 12:** People who agree that it is easy to find good housing at a reasonable price in their city, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Aalborg (DK)	68 %	Geneva (CH)	8 %
Oulu (FI)	68 %	Munich (DE)	10 %
Skopje (MK)	65 %	Istanbul (TR)	10 %
Tyneside conurbation (UK)	65 %	Stockholm (SE)	11 %
Palermo (IT)	63 %	Hamburg (DE)	11 %
Piatra Neamț (RO)	61 %	Zürich (CH)	11 %
Oviedo (ES)	60 %	Paris (FR)	12 %
Białystok (PL)	58 %	Luxembourg (LU)	14 %
Podgorica (ME)	55 %	Copenhagen (DK)	14 %
Belfast (UK)	54 %	Bratislava (SK)	15 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

At least 54 % of residents in the top 10 cities think that their city has affordable housing (Table 12). Among the bottom 10 cities, only between 8 % and 15 % of the residents think so.

### Social housing pilot in Ostrava promotes inclusion in Czechia

Ostrava, Czechia's third-largest city, has put in place a social housing pilot project to improve social inclusion in the Moravian Silesia region. The project has renovated 105 apartments for families who would otherwise live in substandard housing, with five set aside as emergency homes. It has also developed processes to access housing, a framework to cooperate with city districts and a system of social support for tenants. Tenants can more easily stabilise their lives and participate in society, while their low rent returns a profit to the city. At the national level, cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is allowing the project to influence social housing legislation and to help create methodologies for other parts of Czechia. In particular, it is a positive example of policies that could benefit the Moravian Silesia region.

The total amount of investment for the social housing in the city of Ostrava project is EUR 540 489, with the EU's European Social Fund contributing EUR 459 416 through the employment operational programme for the 2014–2020 programming period. The investment falls under the 'fighting poverty' and 'social innovation and transnational cooperation' priorities.

See also: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/projects/Czechia/social-housing-pilot-in-ostrava-promotes-inclusion-in-the-czech-republic](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/Czechia/social-housing-pilot-in-ostrava-promotes-inclusion-in-the-czech-republic).

Compared to 2019, the share of residents with a positive view of housing dropped, on average, by 4 pp, from 38 % to 34 %. The largest decline happened in cities of up to 250 000 people,

from 51 % in 2023 to 43 % in 2019, followed by a decline in cities with between 500 000 and 1 million inhabitants, from 40 % to 36 %. In 10 cities the share of residents with a positive view of housing fell by 10 pp or more. The most significant decreases were in Budapest (HU, – 18 pp), Braga (PT, – 15 pp), Málaga and Oviedo (ES, – 14 pp), and Heraklion (EL, – 14 pp). Only 24 cities remained stable, with a variation of +/- 2 pp, and few cities improved: London (UK, + 8 pp), Oslo (NO, + 8 pp), Berlin (DE, + 7 pp), Amsterdam (NL, + 6 pp), Helsinki (FI, + 6 pp). Overall, the correlation between the 2 years is very high (0.96), meaning that the ranking of the cities almost did not change between the 2 years.

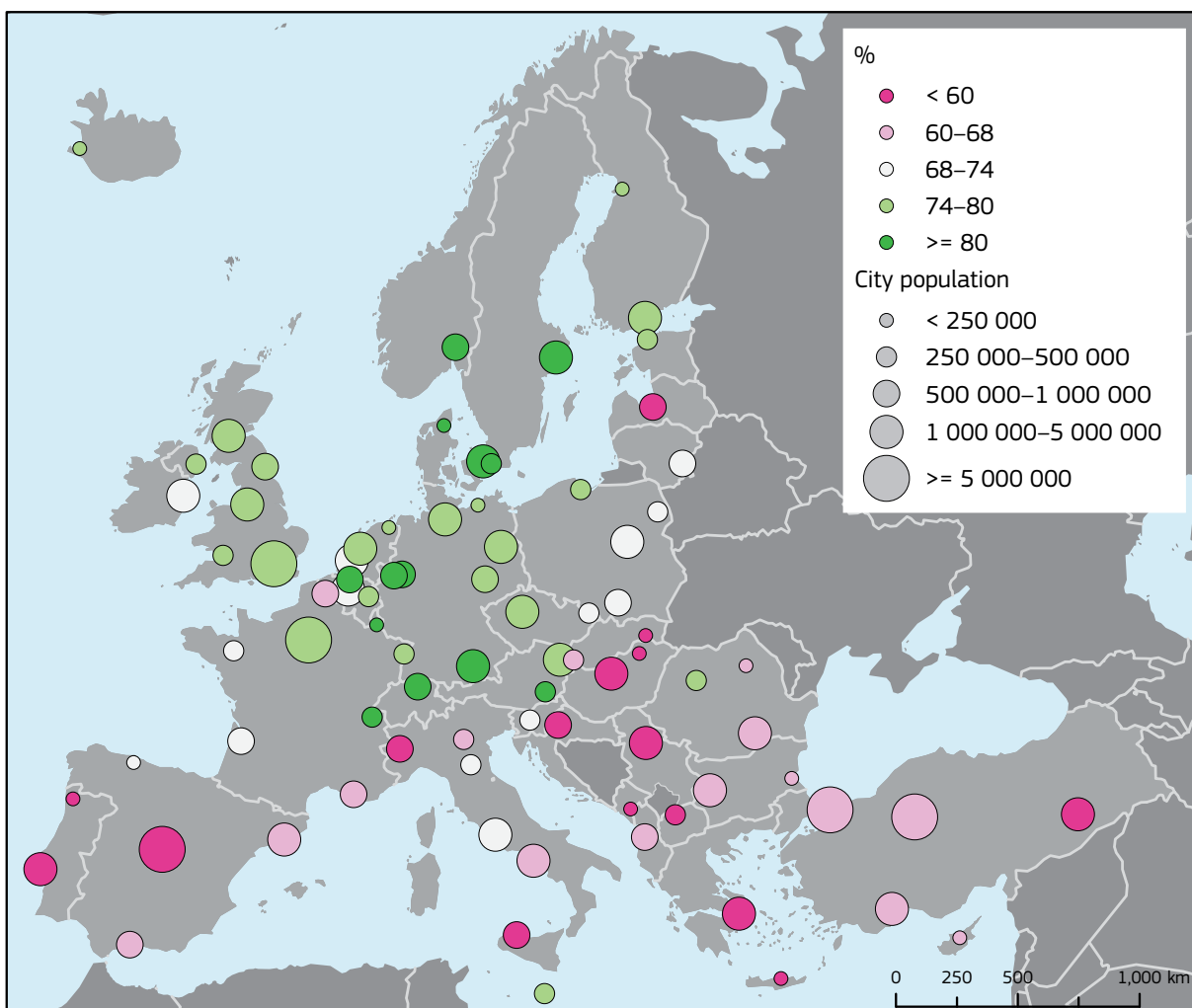
## More people are satisfied with their finances in cities in northern and western Member States

A good financial situation is critical for a good quality of life (European Commission, 2016). This is necessary to pay for essential goods and services as well as to participate in social and cultural activities. In 2021, 11.9 % of the EU population was either materially or socially deprived (Eurostat) <sup>(25)</sup>. The highest risks of poverty or social exclusion among people living in rural areas were principally recorded in eastern and southern Member States; by contrast, in several western and northern

Member States the highest risk was recorded among people living in cities (Eurostat 2022).

On average, 70 % of city residents are satisfied with the financial situation of their household (Map 9). For most countries there are no large internal differences, and the cities have a similar share of residents who are satisfied with their financial situation. Only in Romania, Belgium, Spain, France and Italy are there relevant differences between cities. In general, capital cities score lower on this front: their share of satisfied residents is 3 pp lower than in non-capital cities. This could be partly due to the difficulty in finding good housing at a reasonable price.

**Map 9:** People satisfied with the financial situation of their household



### Satisfaction with household income

Financial situation of my household: total satisfied (%)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

<sup>25</sup> This means they could not afford 5 out of 13 items, including issues such as facing unexpected expenses, keeping the home warm, avoiding arrears, replacing worn-out furniture or clothes, a week's holiday, regular leisure activities, getting together with friends / family, etc.: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20171212-1> and [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Living\\_conditions\\_in\\_Europe\\_-\\_material\\_deprivation\\_and\\_economic\\_strain](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Living_conditions_in_Europe_-_material_deprivation_and_economic_strain)

More than 80 % of residents are satisfied with the financial situation in the top 10 cities compared to less than 60 % in the

bottom 10 and less than 40 % in Athens (EL, 39 %) and Heraklion (EL, 37 %) (see Table 13) <sup>(26)</sup>.

**Table 13:** People satisfied with the financial situation of their household, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Zürich (CH)	90 %	Heraklion (EL)	37 %
Luxembourg (LU)	88 %	Athens (EL)	39 %
Oslo (NO)	87 %	Skopje (MK)	51 %
Malmö (SE)	85 %	Miskolc (HU)	52 %
Geneva (CH)	85 %	Lisbon (PT)	53 %
Antwerp (BE)	84 %	Diyarbakir (TR)	54 %
Copenhagen (DK)	83 %	Belgrade (RS)	54 %
Stockholm (SE)	82 %	Palermo (IT)	55 %
Aalborg (DK)	81 %	Madrid (ES)	55 %
Graz (AT)	81 %	Budapest (HU)	57 %

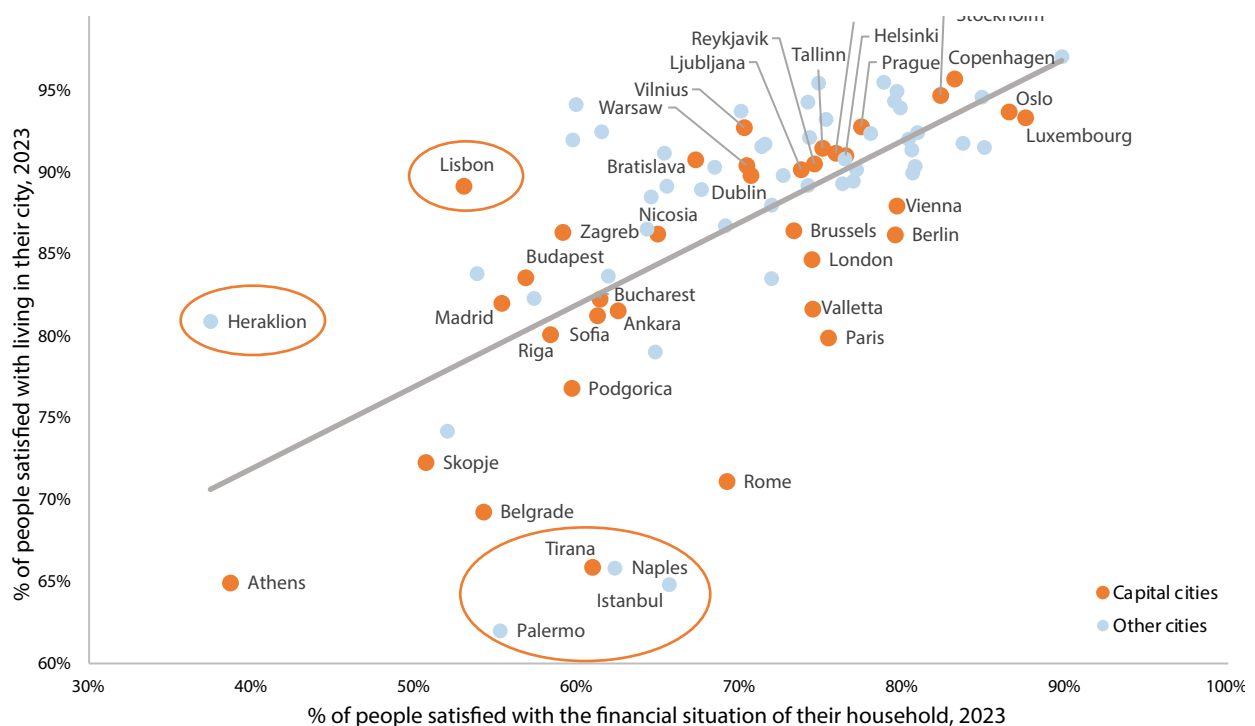
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know'/not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

Same as with job opportunities, the financial situation has a substantial impact on people's satisfaction with living in a city. The more people are satisfied with their financial situation, the more they are satisfied with living in a city <sup>(27)</sup>. For two cities, this relationship does not hold up as well. In Lisbon (PT) and

Heraklion (EL), a high percentage of people are satisfied with living there, but only a small number are satisfied with their financial situation. In Istanbul (TR), the opposite holds: a lower number are satisfied with living there, but a higher percentage are satisfied with their financial situation (Figure 23).

**Figure 23:** People satisfied with living in the city versus those satisfied with the financial situation of their household



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

<sup>26</sup> Southern Member States have been hit hard by the Great Recession, and various countries in this area are characterised by rising inequality, slow economic growth and / or high unemployment (European Commission, 2020). On the other hand, eastern Member States, the western Balkans and Türkiye are transition countries characterised by a growing economy but comparatively low salaries, which may make living in cities, where prices are generally high, difficult.

<sup>27</sup> Satisfaction with one's financial situation explains 43 % of the variation in one's satisfaction with living in a city, i.e. an R-square of 0.43.

Residents in cities who feel satisfied with the financial situation of their household decreased by 3 pp on average in 2023 compared to 2019. Looking at the differences by geographical areas, in cities in northern Member States the share of people satisfied with the financial situation of the household dropped by 6 pp, followed by Türkiye and the western Balkans with a decline of 4 pp and 3 pp, respectively. In cities in eastern and southern Member States, on the other hand, it remained quite stable. Among the worst-performing cities are Diyarbakir (TR, - 12 pp), Helsinki and Oulu (FI, - 10 pp, respectively), Rostock (DE, - 7 pp), Turin and Verona (IT, - 7 pp, respectively). Of the 18 cities that experienced an improvement, Liège (BE) and Luxembourg (LU), scored highest, with + 5 pp and + 3 pp, respectively.

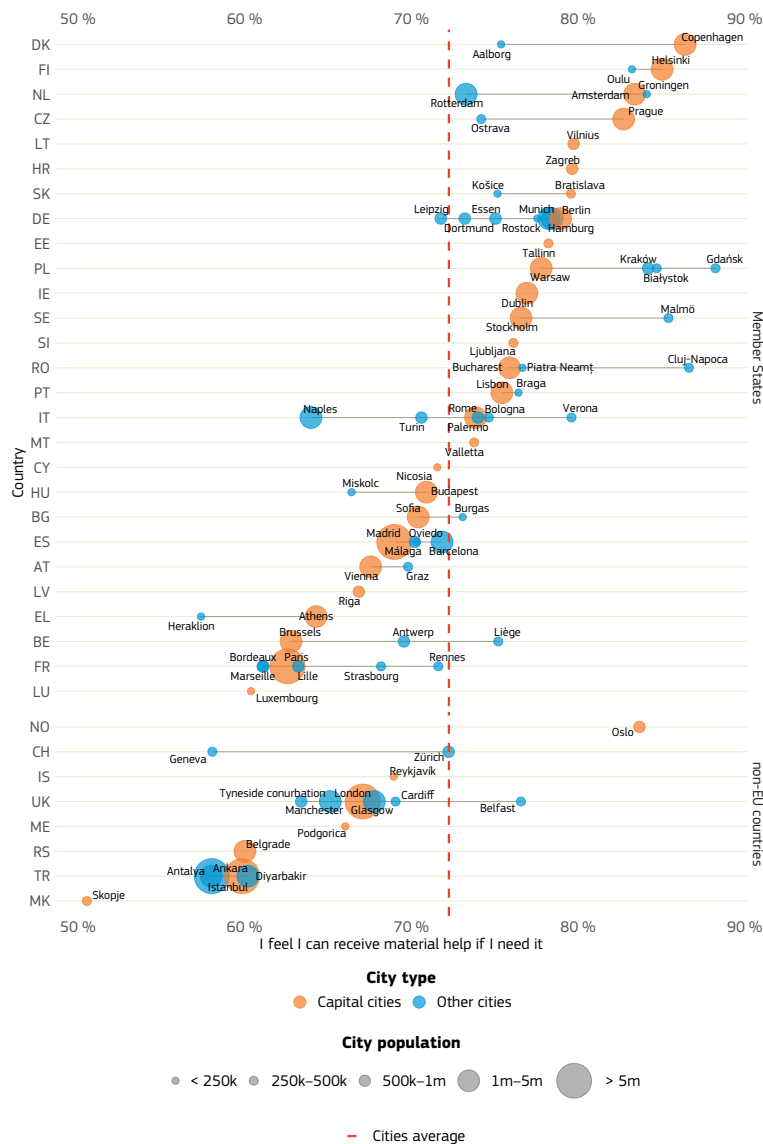
in one's life. Having a supportive social environment can also be a preventive factor for health problems and can also enhance mental well-being (Eurostat, 2019).

On average, in European cities 72 % of residents feel they will receive material help in case of need. However, this figure varies between geographical areas and within countries. While in cities in western and southern Member States, and in EFTA countries the share of inhabitants feeling they will receive material help in case of need is close to the European average, it is equal to only 59 % in the western Balkans and Türkiye, while in cities in northern Member States it reaches 82 %. Dutch, Czech, Polish, Swedish and Romanian cities, on average, perform better than the mean, but intra-country heterogeneity is relatively high. Italy and the United Kingdom are the only two countries with a city well below the average and another well above it. Wide differences are also present in France, Belgium and Switzerland. Cities in these countries perform below average.

### People in cities in northern Member States feel more confident that they will receive more material help in case of need

Receiving material help in case of need is fundamental for ensuring good living conditions and a feeling of being supported

Figure 24: People feeling they will receive material help in case of need, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

The top-performing cities are all from central, eastern and northern Member States. On the other hand, the 10 cities with the lowest score are mainly from the western Balkans and Türkiye. In six cities, less than 60 % of the inhabitants feel they

will receive material help in case of need: Tirana (AL, 59 %), Geneva (CH, 58 %), Istanbul (TR, 58 %), Antalya (TR, 58 %), Heraklion (EL, 57 %) and Skopje (MK, 51 %).

**Table 14:** People feeling they will receive material help in case of need, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Gdańsk (PL)	88 %	Skopje (MK)	51 %
Cluj-Napoca (RO)	87 %	Heraklion (EL)	57 %
Copenhagen (DK)	86 %	Geneva (CH)	58 %
Malmö (SE)	85 %	Istanbul (TR)	58 %
Helsinki (FI)	85 %	Antalya (TR)	58 %
Białystok (PL)	85 %	Tirana (AL)	59 %
Kraków (PL)	84 %	Luxembourg (LU)	60 %
Groningen (NL)	84 %	Diyarbakir (TR)	60 %
Oslo (NO)	84 %	Belgrade (RS)	60 %
Amsterdam (NL)	83 %	Ankara (TR)	60 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

Receiving material help in case of need increases the satisfaction with living in a city <sup>(28)</sup>. However, the points representing the cities, while following a clear pattern, are relatively dispersed around the line that interpolates them. Indeed, for some cities the relationship does not hold up as well as for others. In Italy, particularly in Palermo and in Rome, a higher percentage of people feel they will receive material help

in case of need than the percentage of those that are satisfied with the city where they live. The opposite is true in cities like Geneva (CH), Luxembourg (LU), Antalya (TR), Bordeaux (FR) and Tyneside conurbation (UK): a significantly higher share of inhabitants are satisfied with living in their city compared to the percentage of people who feel they will receive material help in case of need (Figure 25).

**Figure 25:** People satisfied with living in the city versus those feeling they will receive material help in case of need



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

NB: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

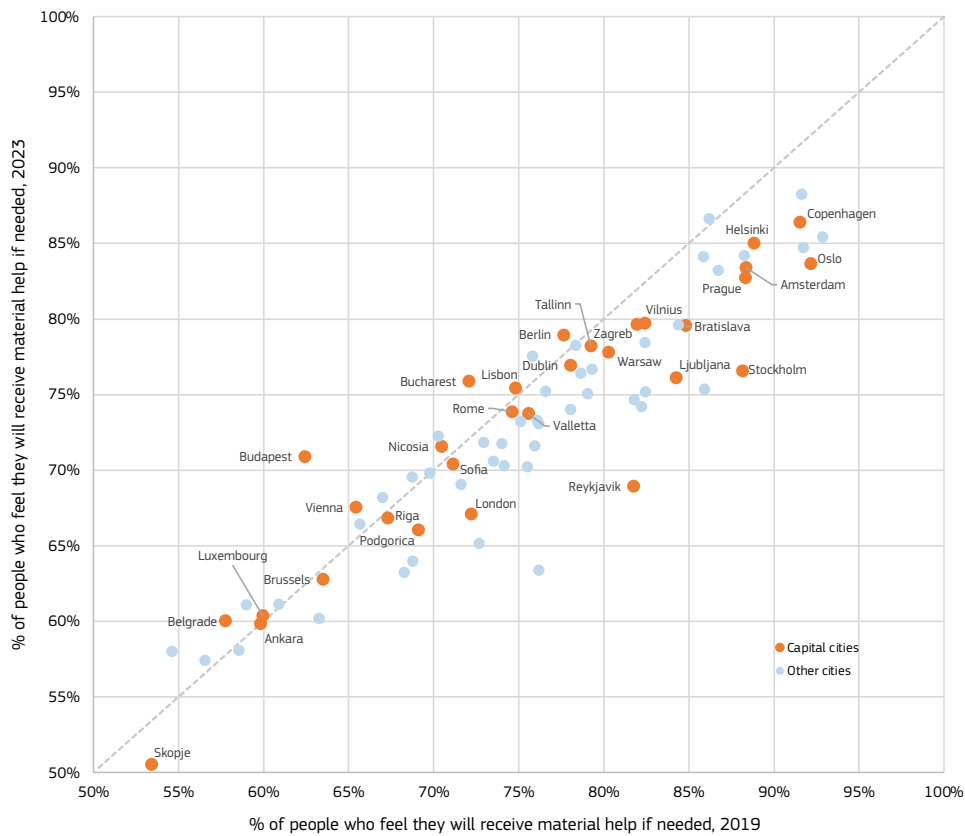
<sup>28</sup> Satisfaction with one's financial situation explains 46 % of the variation in one's satisfaction with living the city, i.e. an R-square of 0.25.

Compared to 2019, in cities for which a comparison is feasible the share of people feeling they will receive material help in case of need decreased by 3 pp on average. The biggest drop, equal to 6 pp, happened in northern Member States, in EFTA countries and the United Kingdom. As shown in Figure 26, in just 15 cities out of 76 this percentage increased by at least 1 pp, and in Budapest (HU), Antalya (TR) and Bucharest (RO) by at least 4 pp. In 21 cities the percentage dropped by at least 5 pp. Among them, the percentage decreased by more than 10 pp for four cities: Reykjavik (IS, - 13 pp), Tyneside conurbation (UK,

- 13 pp), Stockholm (SE, - 12 pp) and Aalborg (DK, - 11 pp). However, the relative position changed only slightly, as the correlation between the 2 years is 0.93.

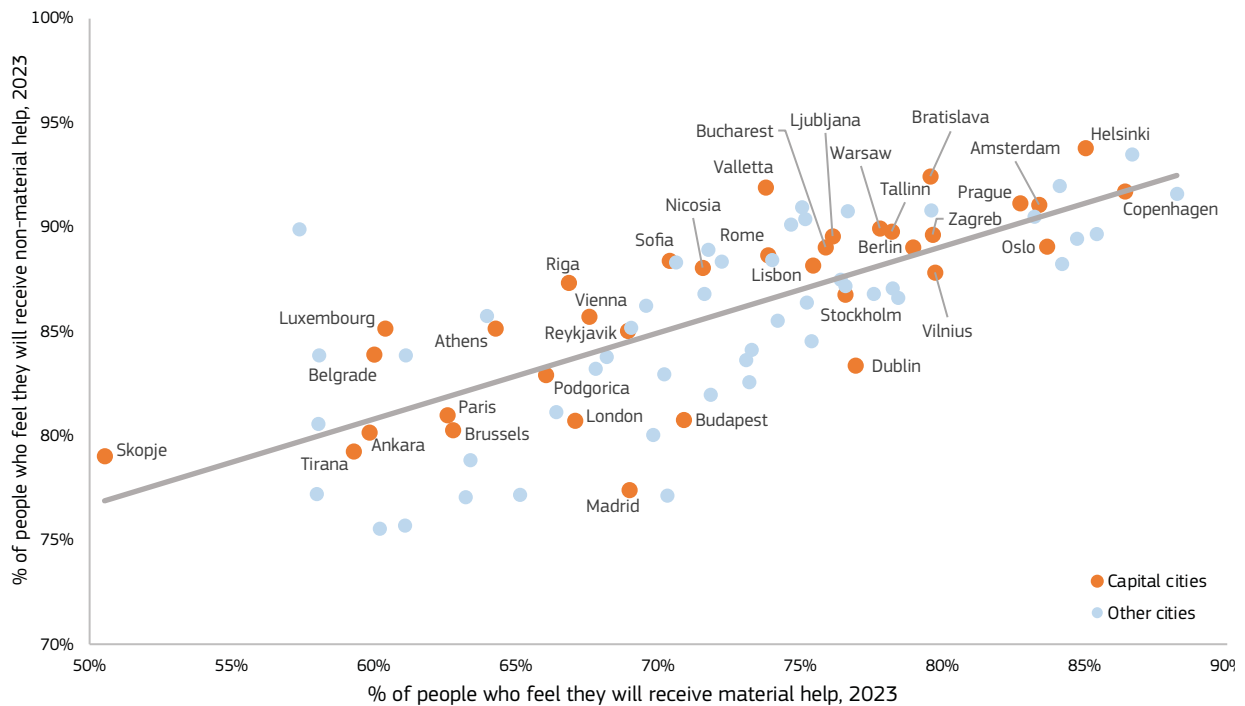
A strong positive correlation, of about 0.7, is observed between the share of residents feeling they could get material help in case of need and those feeling they could get non-material help in case of need, which highlights how material and psychological support can go hand by hand (Figure 27).

**Figure 26:** People feeling they will receive material help in case of need, comparison between 2019 and 2023



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2019 and 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). The dashed line is a 45-degree line (no change between 2019 and 2023). The chart only includes cities for which a time comparison can be made (see page 9).

**Figure 27:** People feeling they will receive non-material help if they need it versus people feeling they will receive material help if they need it



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

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## Chapter 4: Moving around in the city

Destinations within a city must be easily accessible for both residents and visitors. However, urban transportation can give rise to issues like congestion, accidents, noise, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. To minimise possible negative effects, transport networks and infrastructure utilisation can be optimised (Buehler et al., 2017; Redman et al., 2013; Pucher and Buehler, 2008) and a transition to more sustainable modes of transportation can be promoted (Ramezani et al., 2018; Teske et al., 2018; Haustein and Hunecke, 2013).

The European Commission's 2021 new EU urban mobility framework <sup>(29)</sup> focuses on clean, greener and easier urban mobility. Public transport, walking and cycling play a starring role in the proposal. In addition, the sustainable and smart mobility strategy for the EU <sup>(30)</sup> underlines that transport is recognised as an essential service in the European Pillar of Social Rights. It fulfils a basic need in enabling citizens to integrate into society and the labour market and is essential to make mobility fair and just for all. The strategy underlines the need for affordable, accessible and fair mobility.

This chapter discusses transport modes based on the survey question that inquired which modes of transport respondents used on an average day: cars, urban public transport, cycling, walking or other means of transport (for instance, micro mobility) <sup>(31)</sup> <sup>(32)</sup>. The chapter concludes with a discussion of respondents' satisfaction with public transport in cities.

### Cars are used less in capital cities

On average, cars are used by 48 % of city residents. Across the surveyed cities, the share of car users varies from 28 % in Stockholm (SE) to 70 % in Braga (PT) (Figure 28) and declines with city size. While around 52 % of residents say they use a car in a typical day in cities with fewer than 250 000 inhabitants, the percentage decreases to 44 % in cities of 1 to 5 million inhabitants. Car use differs substantially between cities in the same country, with differences of 19 pp in France and the United Kingdom, around 17 pp in Finland, and 16 pp in Italy and Denmark. In most countries, the capital city has the lowest car use. Capital cities usually being the largest city in the country, they tend to have good public transport services; also, using a car may be less attractive due to congestion and higher parking costs.

Cities with the highest car use tend to be relatively small (Table 15). For example, Braga (PT), Reykjavík (IS) and Nicosia (CY) all have a population below 250 000 inhabitants. Furthermore, seven out of the ten cities with the lowest car use are capitals, the only three exceptions being Zürich (CH), Geneva (CH) and Groningen (NL).

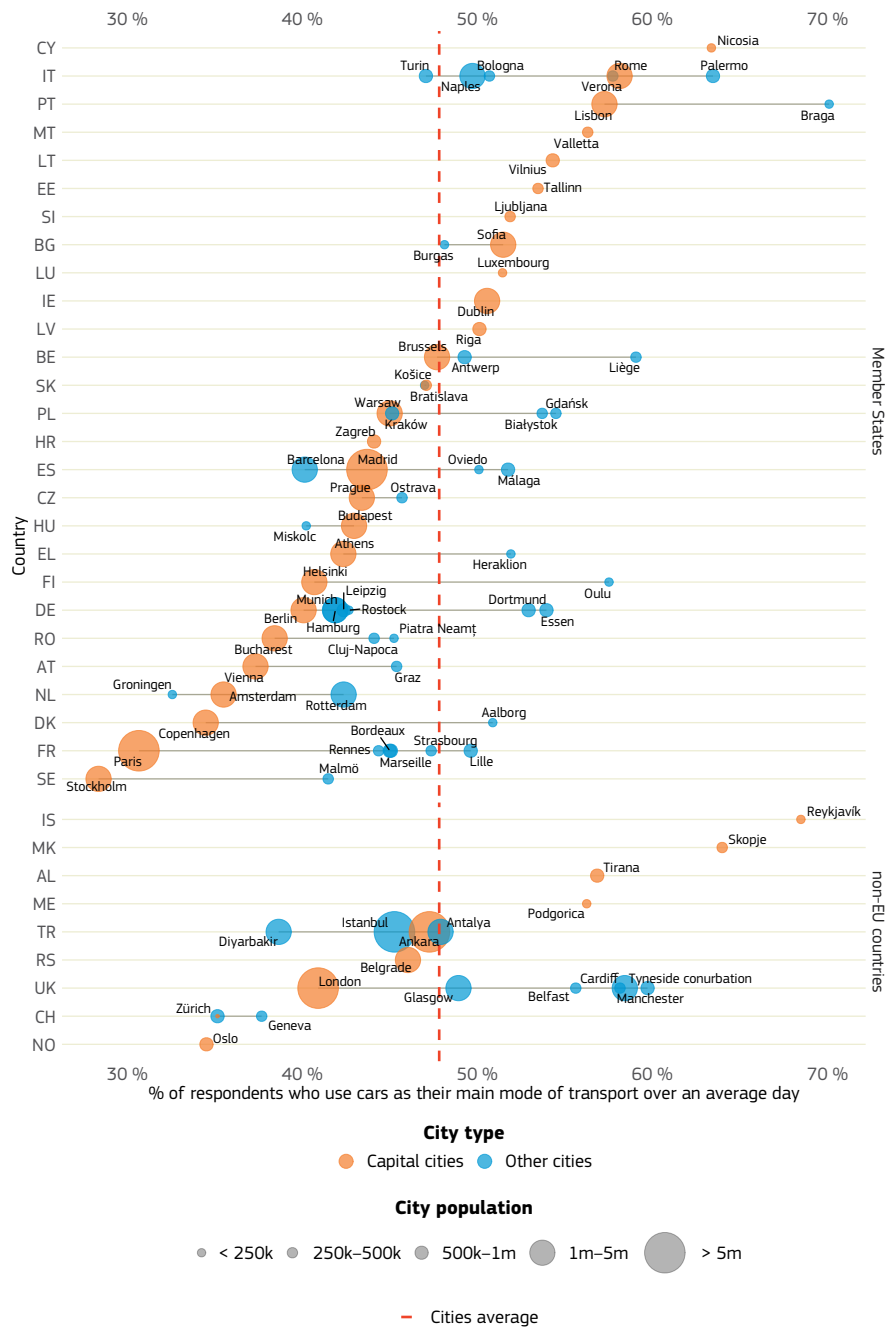
<sup>29</sup> COM(2021) 811 final: Communication from the Commission: The New EU Urban Mobility Framework.

<sup>30</sup> COM(2020) 78: Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future.

<sup>31</sup> Micro mobility commonly refers to transportation over short distances provided by lightweight, usually single-person vehicles (such as bicycles and scooters), mainly used in an urban context.

<sup>32</sup> If a respondent spontaneously mentioned two modes, both were recorded. As a result, the shares of people using different transport modes add up to more than 100 %. Please note that these figures do not represent a modal split, which requires a travel diary with each trip and its mode.

Figure 28: People using cars in a typical day, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

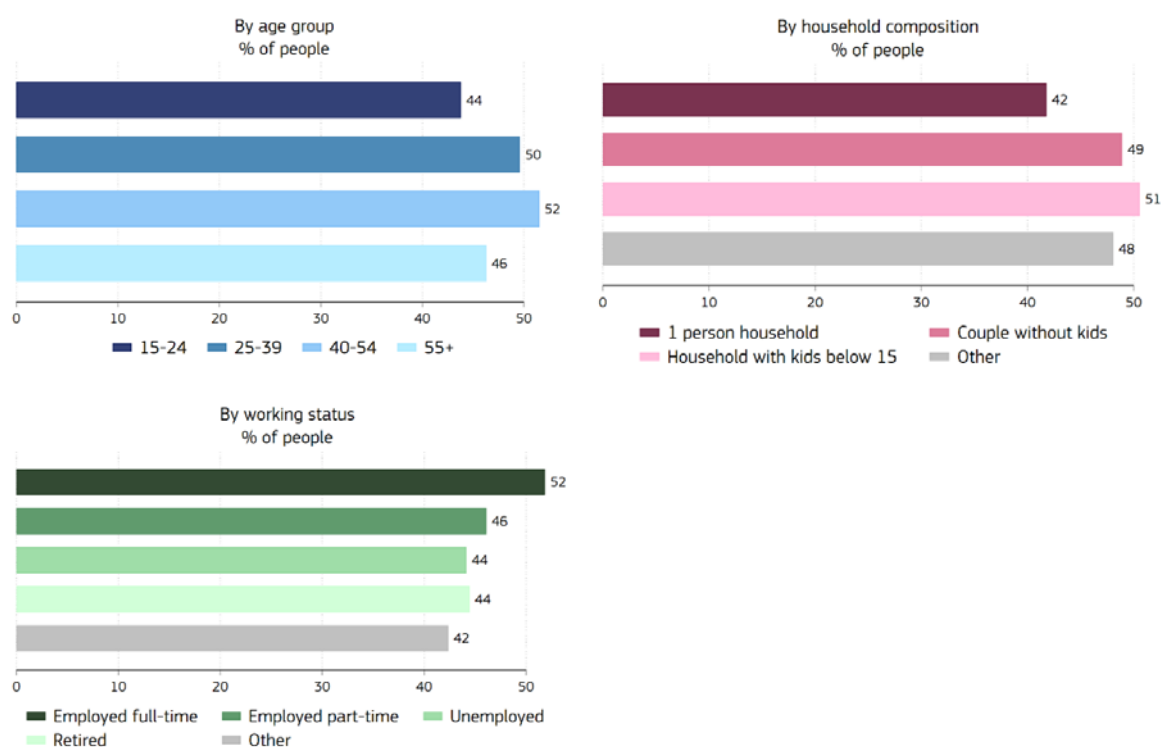
**Table 15:** People using cars in a typical day, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Braga (PT)	70%	Stockholm (SE)	28%
Reykjavík (IS)	68%	Paris (FR)	31%
Skopje (MK)	64%	Groningen (NL)	33%
Palermo (IT)	63%	Copenhagen (DK)	34%
Nicosia (CY)	63%	Oslo (NO)	35%
Tyneside conurbation (UK)	60%	Zürich (CH)	35%
Liege (BE)	59%	Amsterdam (NL)	36%
Manchester (UK)	58%	Vienna (AT)	37%
Cardiff (UK)	58%	Geneva (CH)	38%
Rome (IT)	58%	Bucharest (RO)	38%

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, men are more likely to use cars than women are (50 % versus 46 %). Car use is the highest among people aged 40 to 54 (52 %) and lowest for those aged 15 to 24 (44 %), while there are no significant differences in the use of cars by education level. Households with children tend to use the car more frequently: 51 % of those with children younger than 15 compared to 42 % for single-person households. Finally, the full-time employed are more likely to use a car in a typical day (52 %) than the part-time employed (46 %), the unemployed (44 %) or the retired (44 %) (Figure 29).

**Figure 29:** People using cars in a typical day, by socio-demographic groups

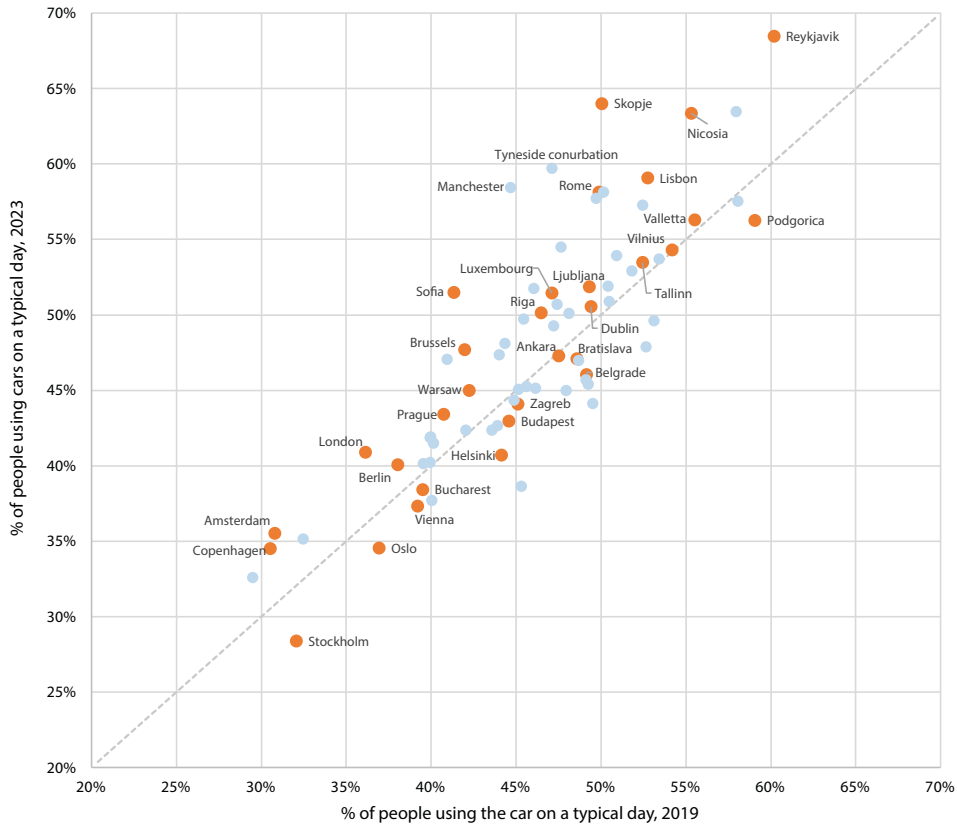
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

On average, across the cities, there has been a slight increase of 2 pp in car usage between 2019 and 2023 (33) (Figure 30). Most cities are positioned above the diagonal (dashed line) in

Figure 30, indicating an increase in usage in 2023 compared to 2019. Skopje (MK), Manchester (UK), Tyneside conurbation (UK) and Sofia (BG) show the most significant deviations.

Figure 30: People using cars in a typical day, comparison between 2019 and 2023



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2019 and 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). The dashed line is a 45-degree line (no change between 2019 and 2023). The chart only includes cities for which a time comparison can be made (see page 9).

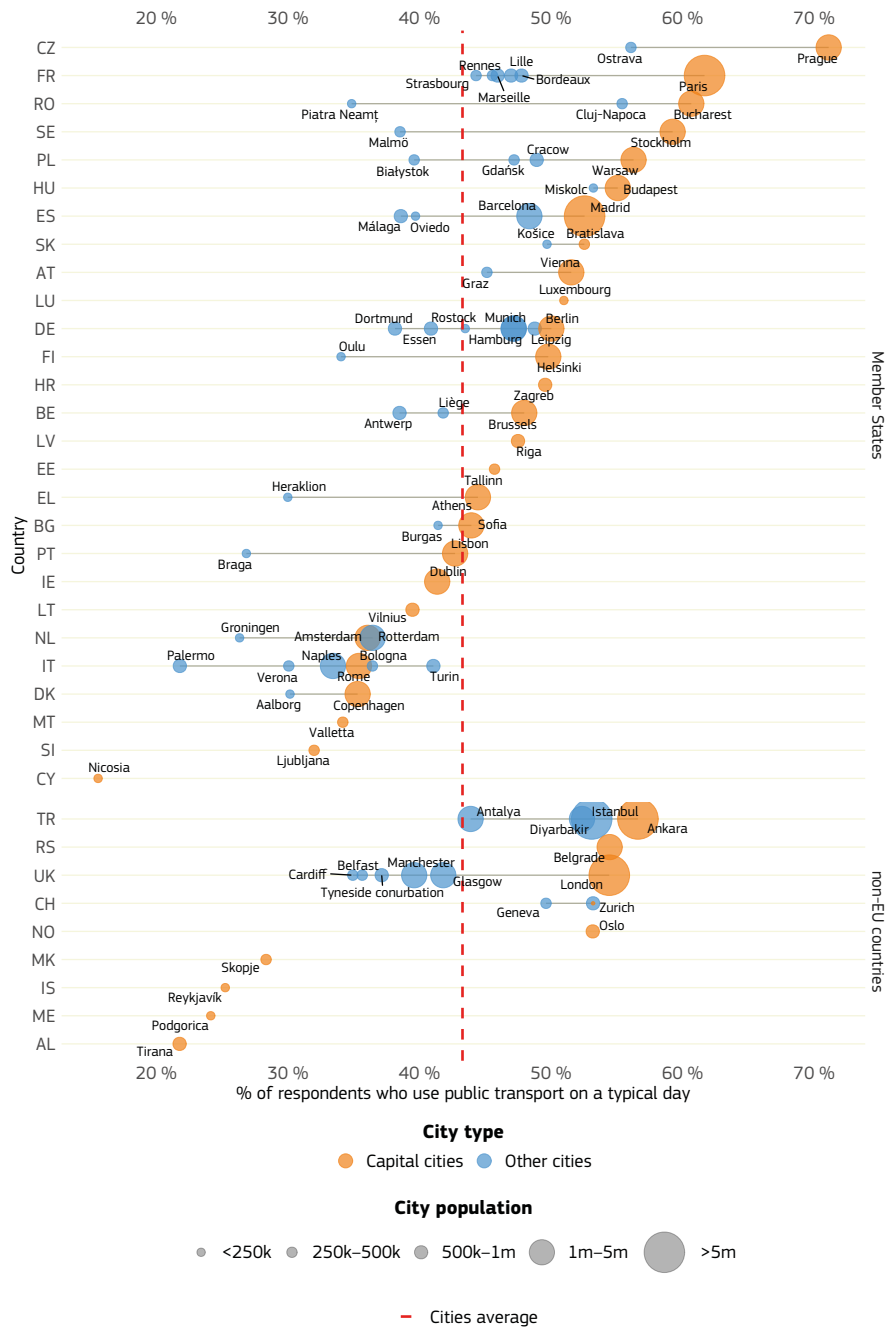
### Larger cities have more public transport users

It is observed that if more residents use public transport, fewer use cars. On average, 43 % of the respondents declared using public transport on a typical day. Across the cities, the share of public transport users varies from 16 % in Nicosia (CY) to slightly more than 70 % in Prague (CZ) (Figure 31), and unlike car usage, this increases with city size. While around 35 % of residents claim they use public transport in a typical day in cities with fewer than 250 000 inhabitants, the percentage

increases to 47 % in cities with 1 to 5 million inhabitants. Furthermore, public transport use presents large differences between cities within the same country, with gaps of 26 pp in Romania, around 20 pp in the United Kingdom, Italy and Sweden, and around 17 pp in Poland and France. In most countries, the share of public transport use is highest in capital cities, in part because these cities tend to have an extensive public transport network with frequent services.

33. For the list of cities for which a comparison is feasible, see page 9.

Figure 31: People using public transport in a typical day, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Indeed, eight of the top ten cities in public transport use are capital cities (Figure 31). Outside the EU, Ankara (TR) and Belgrade (RS) have the highest use of public transport. The remaining 8 in the top 10 are EU cities and include six capitals, Ostrava (CZ) and Cluj-Napoca (RO). The cities in the bottom 10 include five smaller capitals, namely Podgorica (ME), Nicosia (CY), Reykjavik (IS), Skopje (MK) and Tirana (AL). Tirana (AL) and Palermo (IT) are the largest among the bottom 10 in terms of population size.

On average, since the last survey was conducted and across all surveyed cities, public transportation use remained quite stable.

However, compared to 2019, we observe an increase in public transport use in cities where it was already high and a decrease in cities where it was previously low. Prague (CZ), which held the highest ranking in 2019, experienced a further increase of 13 pp. This trend is consistent with seven other top ranked cities in public transport usage. Conversely, cities at the bottom of the list saw further decreases, such as - 7 pp in Palermo (IT), and - 4 pp Reykjavik (IS). The divergence between cities at the top and the bottom of the ranking has therefore increased compared to 5 years ago.

**Table 16:** People using public transport in a typical day, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Prague (CZ)	71 %	Nicosia (CY)	16 %
Paris (FR)	62 %	Tirana (AL)	22 %
Bucharest (RO)	61 %	Palermo (IT)	22 %
Stockholm (SE)	59 %	Podgorica (ME)	24 %
Ankara (TR)	57 %	Reykjavik (IS)	25 %
Warsaw (PL)	56 %	Groningen (NL)	26 %
Ostrava (CZ)	56 %	Braga (PT)	27 %
Cluj-Napoca (RO)	55 %	Skopje (MK)	28 %
Budapest (HU)	55 %	Heraklion (EL)	30 %
Belgrade (RS)	54 %	Verona (IT)	30 %

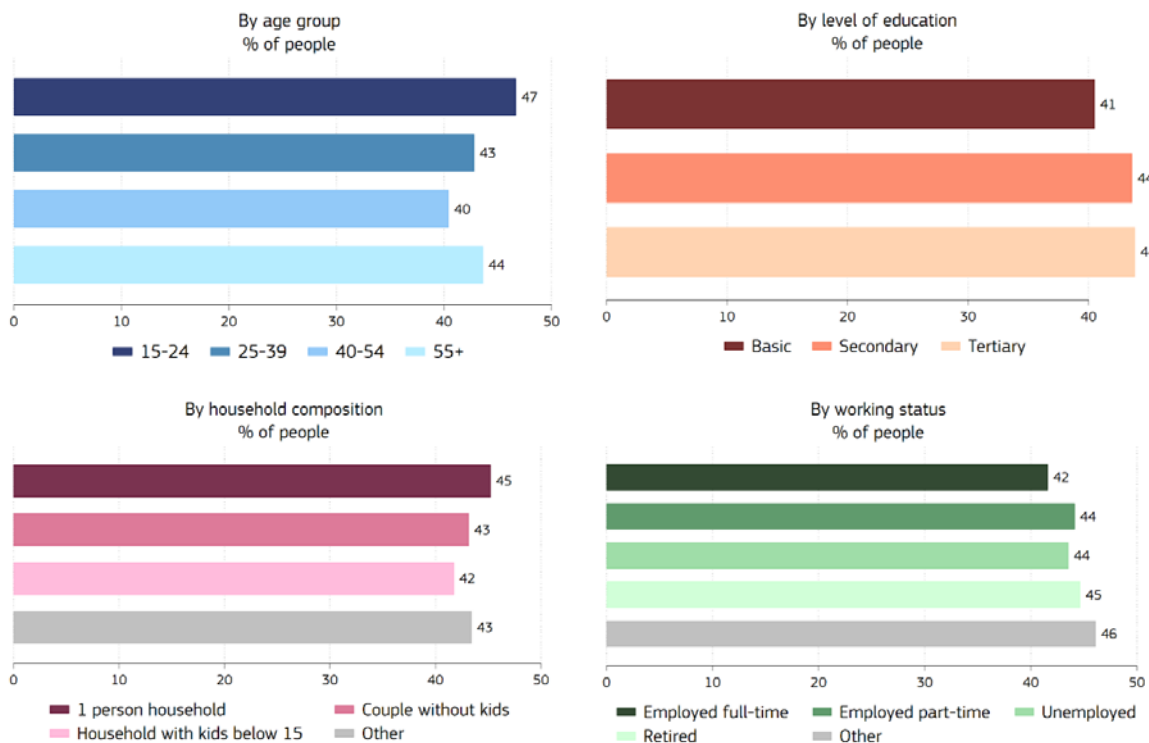
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

Public transport users are more likely to be women, the share being 45 % which is 4 pp higher than for men (41 %). The share of public transport users is higher in two distinct age groups: 55 and older (44 %) and in the 15 to 24 group (47 %). Public transport use is 4 pp lower for respondents with basic education

(41 %) compared to respondents with a tertiary degree (44 %). Single person households tend to use public transport more frequently (45 %). Finally, in a typical day, when it comes to working status, retired people are more likely to use public transport (45 %) than the other groups (Figure 32).

**Figure 32:** People using public transport in a typical day, by socio-demographic groups



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

## Only a few cities have a high share of daily cyclists

Cycling is a relevant transport mode only in a few cities. On average, it is used as mode of transport for 14 % of the respondents, and its use tends to decline with city size. While around 16 % of residents say they use cycling in a typical day in cities with fewer than 250 000 inhabitants, the percentage decreases to 14 % in cities from 1 to 5 million inhabitants. In a typical day, only three cities report more than 35 % of their residents using a bike (Table 17): Groningen and Amsterdam in

the Netherlands and Copenhagen in Denmark. The 10 cities with lowest score range between 5 % and 8 %.

In several countries, cycling varies between cities, especially in countries with cities with a high share of cyclers, such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Germany (Figure 33). In the survey, three cities – Amsterdam and Groningen (NL) and Copenhagen (DK) – have low values for both public transport and car use because so many people cycle. Among all cities outside the EU cities, only Oslo (NO) and Tirana (AL) show slightly higher percentages of bike use compared to the survey cities' average.

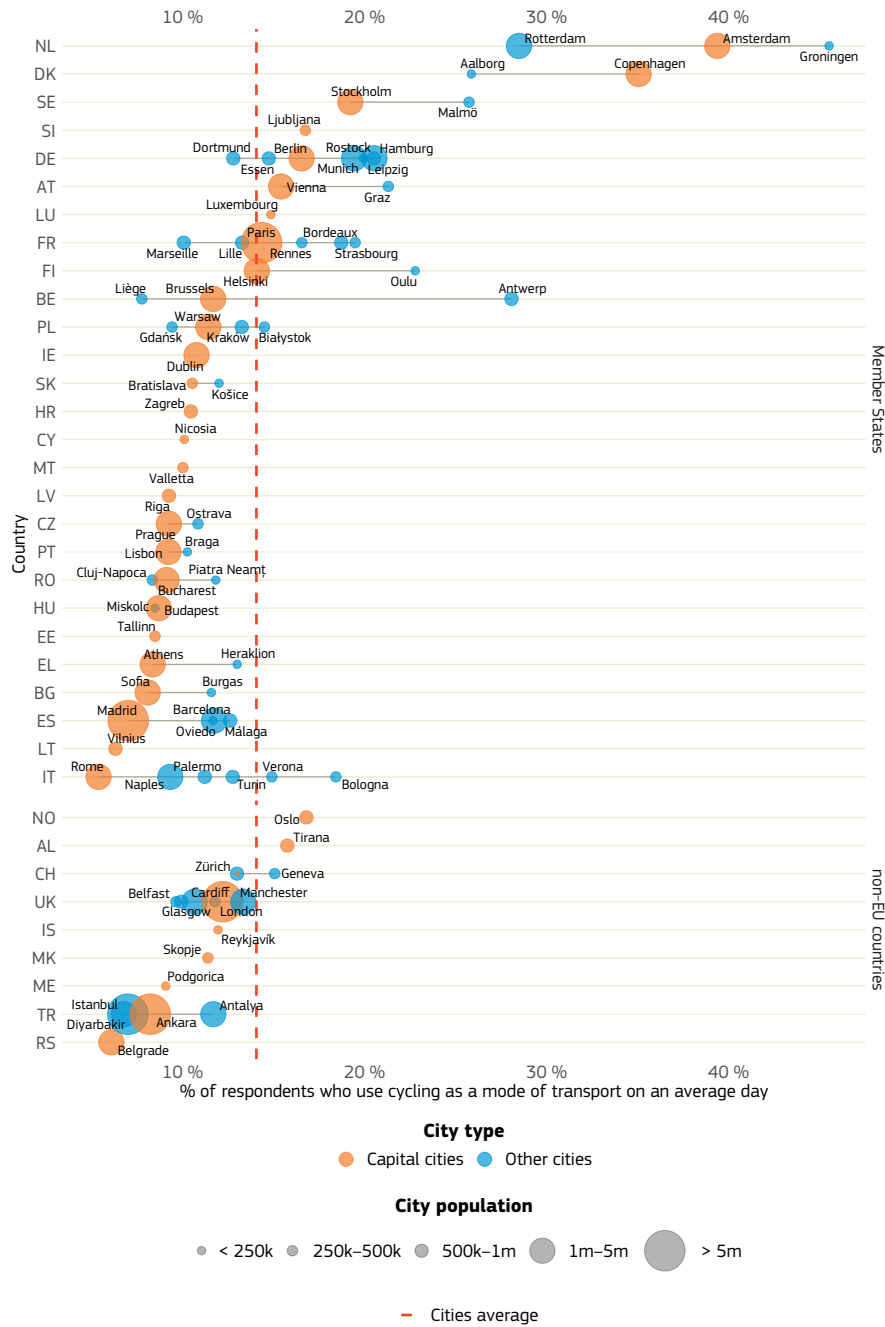
**Table 17:** People cycling in a typical day, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Groningen (NL)	46 %	Rome (IT)	5 %
Amsterdam (NL)	39 %	Belgrade (RS)	6 %
Copenhagen (DK)	35 %	Vilnius (LT)	6 %
Rotterdam (NL)	28 %	Diyarbakir (TR)	7 %
Antwerp (BE)	28 %	Istanbul (TR)	7 %
Aalborg (DK)	26 %	Madrid (ES)	7 %
Malmö (SE)	26 %	Liège (BE)	8 %
Oulu (FI)	23 %	Sofia (BG)	8 %
Graz (AT)	21 %	Ankara (TR)	8 %
Hamburg (DE)	21 %	Cluj-Napoca (RO)	8 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

Figure 33: People cycling in a typical day, by city



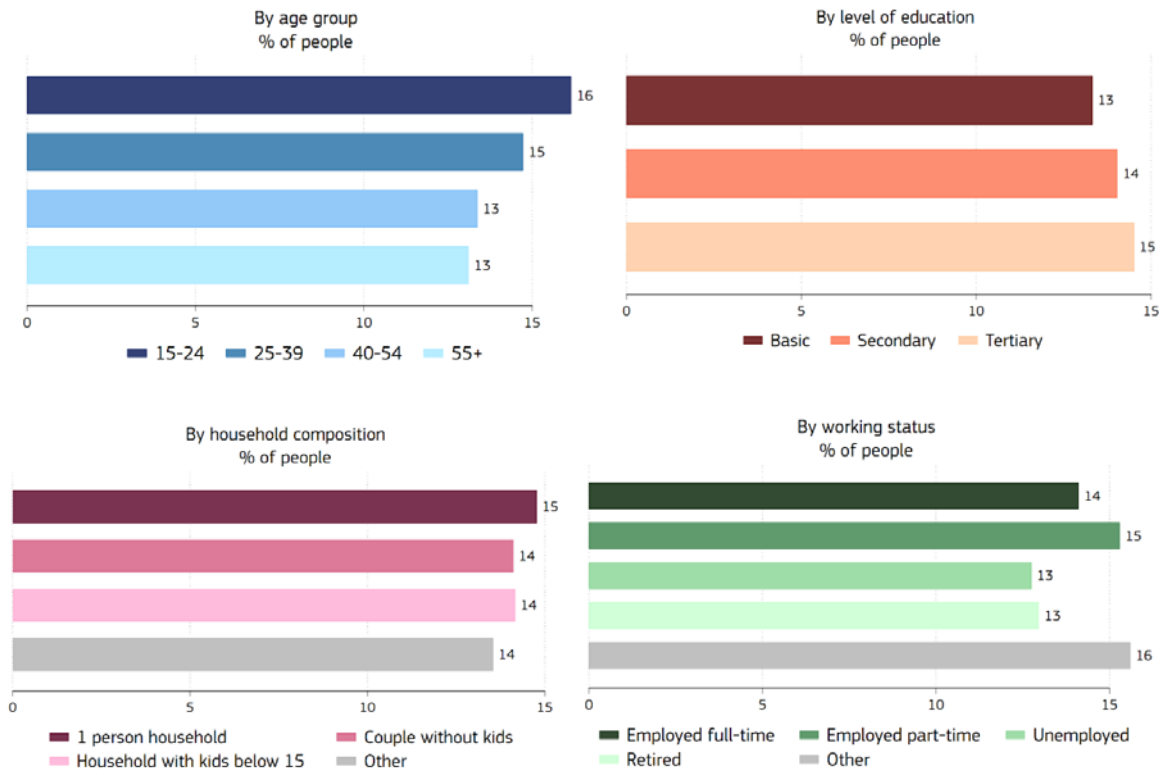
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

In the survey, women were more likely to mention cycling than men. In an average day, the 15 to 24 age group is the most likely to use a bike (16%), while only 13% of residents aged 55 and older tend to cycle (Figure 34). When it comes to other

socio-demographic characteristics, the percentage of bike users is higher in the group with tertiary education and single person households (15%), whereas retired or unemployed are less likely to cycle (13%).



**Figure 34:** People cycling in a typical day, by socio-demographic groups



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

### Walking in a typical day gains popularity

Across the cities, the share of people walking in a typical day amounts to 27 %. It ranges between 16 % (Istanbul and Ankara, TR) and 40 % (Paris, FR) and tends to decline with city size. For seven capital cities, more than 30 % of the respondents reported that they walked in a typical day (Figure 35).

The 10 cities with the lowest scores range between 16 % and 21 % (Table 18), and the top 10 cities with the highest scores range from 40 % to 33 %. Hence, walking shows less divergence between top- and bottom-ranked cities than any other mobility mode.

Figure 35: People walking in a typical day, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

**Table 18:** People walking in a typical day, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Paris (FR)	40 %	Istanbul (TR)	16 %
Stockholm (SE)	38 %	Ankara (TR)	16 %
Helsinki (FI)	36 %	Antalya (TR)	18 %
Glasgow (UK)	36 %	Kraków (PL)	18 %
Rennes (FR)	35 %	Valletta (MT)	18 %
London (UK)	35 %	Diyarbakir (TR)	19 %
Manchester (UK)	35 %	Gdańsk (PL)	20 %
Athens (EL)	35 %	Skopje (MK)	20 %
Marseille (FR)	34 %	Rome (IT)	21 %
Madrid (ES)	33 %	Belgrade (RS)	21 %

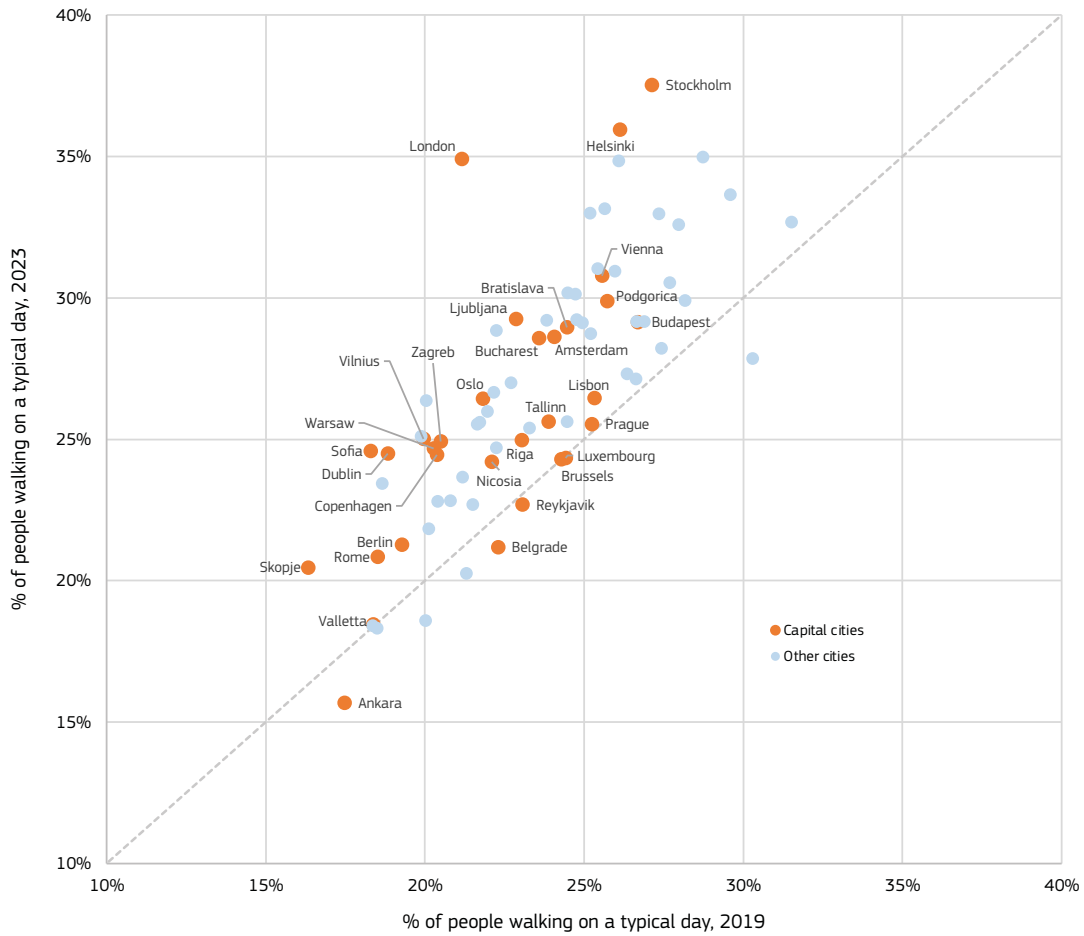
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

On average, there has been an increase of 15 % (or 3 pp) of people walking in a typical day (Figure 36) between 2019 and 2023. In the majority of cities, the share of people walking has increased (Figure 36). London (UK), Stockholm (SE), Helsinki (FI), Sofia (BG), Manchester (UK), Málaga (ES) and Antwerp (BE) display the most significant increase: the share of people walking in a typical day has increased by more than 30 % between 2019 and 2023. Such deviations might signal changes

in preferences attributable to social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, or to increases in energy costs of other mobility modes. These changes are in line with the objectives outlined in the 2021 new EU urban mobility framework, particularly in terms of promoting walking to work as a means of commuting, which contributes to enhancing the health and well-being of employees.

**Figure 36:** People walking in a typical day, comparison between 2019 and 2023



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2019 and 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). The dashed line is a 45-degree line (no change between 2019 and 2023). The chart only includes cities for which a time comparison can be made (see page 9).

### Public transport in European cities perceived as safe and accessible.

Overall, around seven out of ten city residents are satisfied with public transport, although this figure varies from 22 % in Palermo (IT) to 95 % in Zürich (CH) (Table 19). The top 10 cities all score above 87 %, while the bottom 10 score between 22 % and 54 %. Nine of the bottom ten cities are located in southern Member States and the western Balkans.

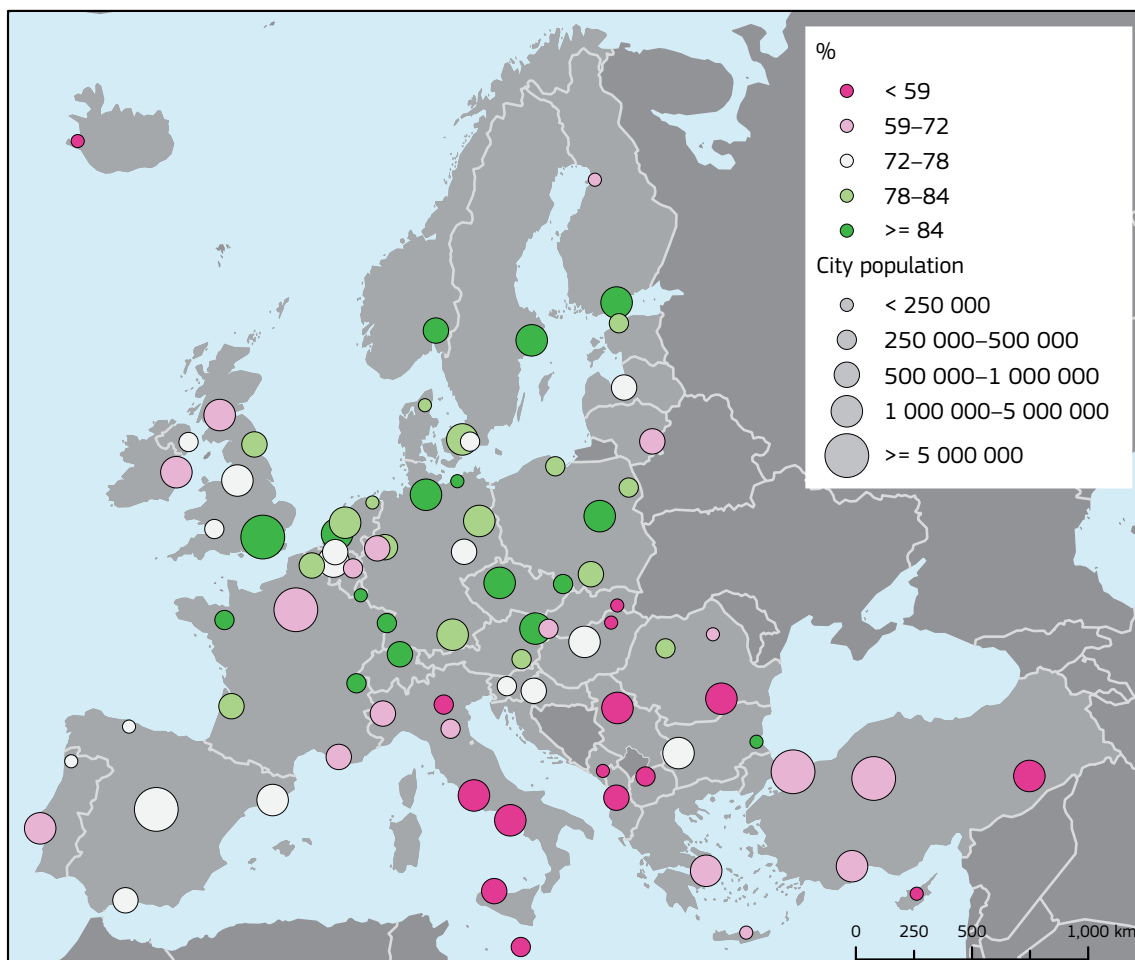
On average, residents of capital cities are less likely to be satisfied (69 %) than those living in non-capital cities (73 %). Fewer residents are satisfied in cities in southern Member States (59 %), in the western Balkans (39 %) and Türkiye (59 %) compared to the rest of Europe (Map 10).

**Table 19:** People satisfied with public transport in the city, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Zürich (CH)	95 %	Palermo (IT)	22 %
Vienna (AT)	91 %	Rome (IT)	29 %
Rotterdam (NL)	89 %	Tirana (AL)	29 %
Helsinki (FI)	89 %	Naples (IT)	30 %
Oslo (NO)	88 %	Podgorica (ME)	37 %
Prague (CZ)	88 %	Belgrade (RS)	44 %
Geneva (CH)	88 %	Nicosia (CY)	44 %
Strasbourg (FR)	87 %	Skopje (MK)	47 %
Hamburg (DE)	87 %	Miskolc (HU)	53 %
Rostock (DE)	87 %	Bucharest (RO)	54 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

**Map 10:** People satisfied with public transport in the city

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

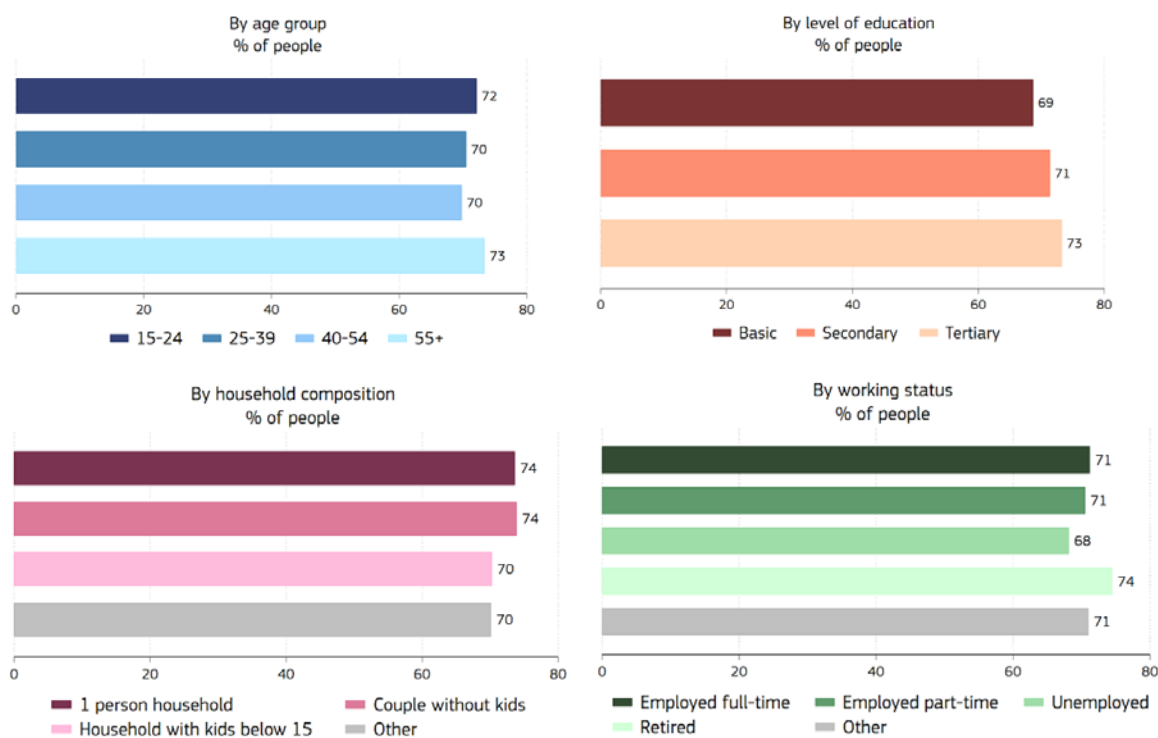
Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Compared to 2019, the share of satisfied residents increased the most in Bratislava, (SK, + 7 pp), Oulu (FI, + 7 pp), Graz (AT, + 3 pp) and Liège (BE, + 3 pp). On the other hand, significant reductions can be observed in Miskolc (HU, – 19 pp), Skopje (MK, – 15 pp), Manchester (UK, – 9 pp) and Piatra Neamț (RO, – 9 pp).

Satisfaction with public transport is similar for men and women. People aged 55 or older are more satisfied on average (73 %) than other age groups, in particular compared to respondents between 25 and 39 years old and between 40 and 54 years old.

Satisfaction increases with education level: on average, people with tertiary education are more satisfied (73 %) than people with basic and secondary education (69 % and 71 %, respectively) (Figure 37). One- and two-person households with no children are more likely to be satisfied (74 %) than households with children younger than 15 (70 %). With respect to working status, retired residents are most likely to be satisfied (74 %) and the unemployed least likely (68 %), while the employed are in between (71 %, full-time and part-time) (Figure 37).

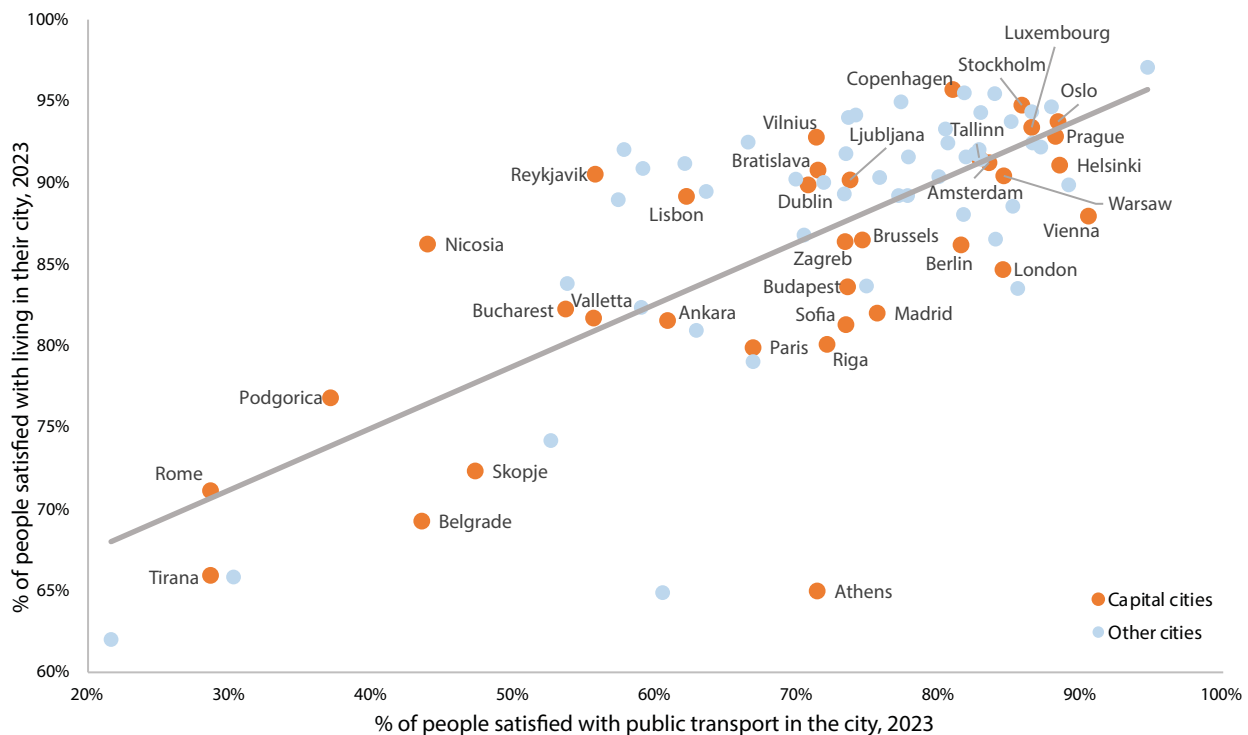
**Figure 37:** People satisfied with public transport in the city, by socio-demographic groups



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Satisfaction with public transport has a strong link to people's general satisfaction with a city and explains half the variation in general satisfaction (Figure 38). This suggests that people's judgement of public transport services has a big impact on their overall satisfaction with the city they live in.

**Figure 38:** People satisfied with living in their city versus people satisfied with public transport in the city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Respondents were also asked to report on whether they perceived public transport in their city as being safe, reliable, frequent, affordable and accessible. On average, 83 % of the respondents found public transport in their city as being safe and accessible, 74 % as being frequent, 73 % as reliable, and around 70 % as affordable.

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## Chapter 5: Culture, squares, parks, and healthcare in the city

Cities often boast major cultural facilities, activities and programmes that can attract large and diverse audiences and contribute to their individual and collective well-being (Blessi et al., 2016; Fancourt and Steptoe, 2018; Grossi et al., 2012; Grossi et al., 2019). Cultural and artistic activities can stimulate people's imagination and emotional responses (Ascenso et al., 2018), foster social interaction or healthy lifestyles (Jones et al., 2013) and help increase cognitive, creative and relational capabilities that empower people and make them feel part of a community (Wilson et al., 2017). Among its objectives, the 2023–2026 work plan for culture aims at 'empowering the cultural and creative sectors and enhancing cultural participation and the role of culture in society', with a view to further promoting cultural participation and its well-being effects<sup>(34)</sup>.

In the urban context, green areas (i.e. parks, public gardens and nearby forests) can play a dual role: on the one hand, they can improve air quality by absorbing pollutants, absorbing rainwater and preventing floods. On the other hand, they provide opportunities for leisure activities and sport, facilitate social contacts, and thus improve quality of life in a city.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, cities temporarily closed parks, public spaces and cultural facilities or otherwise restricted access to them. This, as well as other pandemic-related effects, may have changed citizens' appreciation and use of such spaces.

This chapter starts with a description of the amenities that promote social interaction: cultural facilities, public spaces and green spaces. It then takes a look at healthcare services, critical to ensuring that cities are inclusive and healthy.

### Satisfaction with cultural facilities follows a striking regional pattern

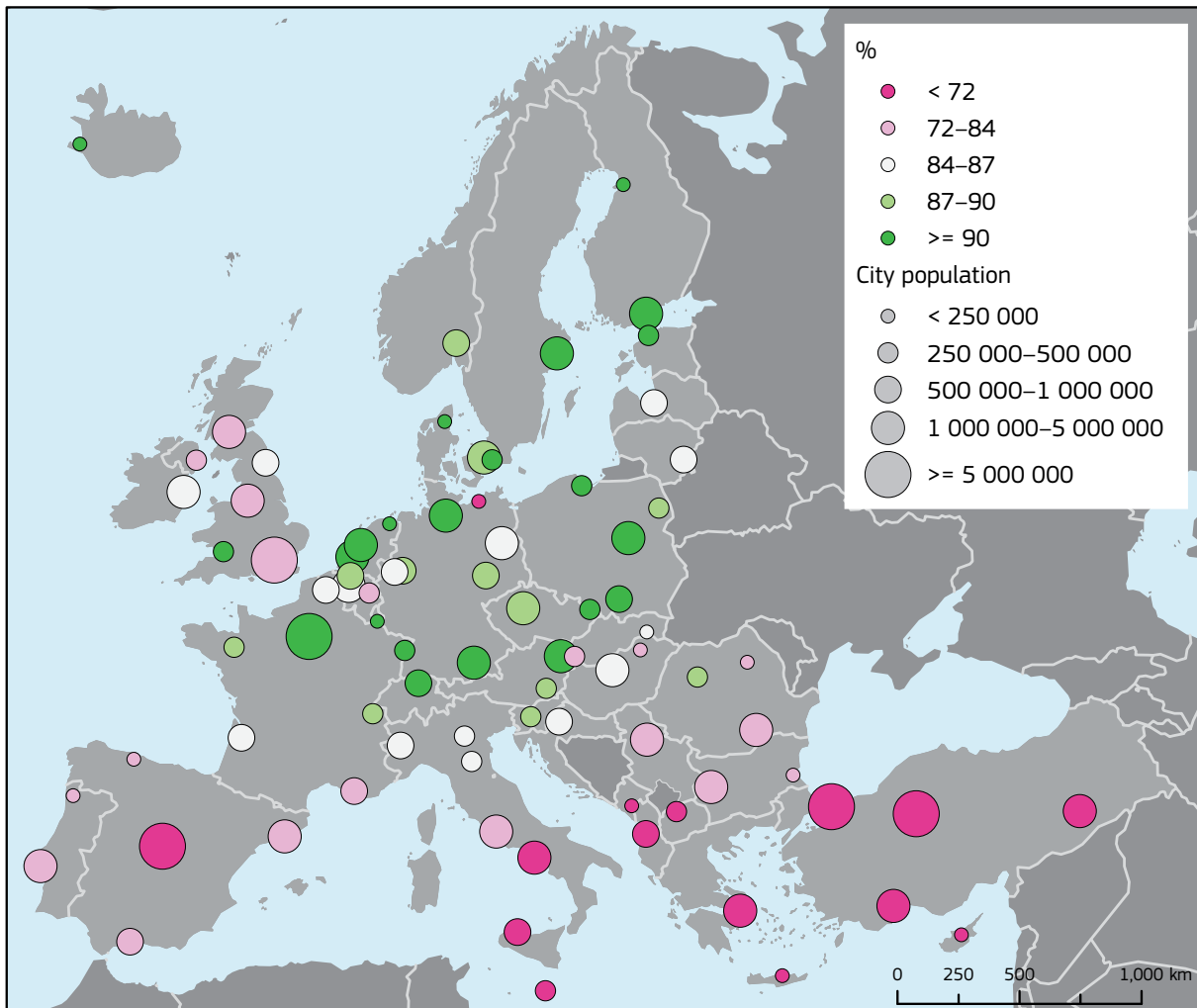
Cultural participation varies across Europe. In 2022, 53 % of the EU-27 population (aged 16 years or over) living in cities reported that they took part in cultural activities<sup>(35)</sup>. This was close to the rates for people living in towns and suburbs (46 %) but much higher than for people living in rural areas (40 %). The concentration of cultural venues in and around cities makes it easier for city residents to visit them. According to Eurofound (2017), a higher share of people living outside cities and suburbs report difficulties accessing cultural facilities compared to cities and suburbs (58 % against 19 %). A recent study on a sample of Italian cities also shows that the number of cultural events per resident is higher in urban centres than in suburbs (Alberti et al., 2023). Yet, cultural participation opportunities may also differ between cities. Larger cities usually offer more and more varied cultural activities, although smaller cities can also have notable cultural assets (Jayne et al., 2010; Lorentzen and Heur, 2012).

To assess how people in Europe perceive the cultural facilities in their city, this section presents the survey results on satisfaction with local cultural facilities, such as concert halls, theatres, museums and libraries.

<sup>34</sup> Official Journal of the European Union (2022), Council Resolution on the EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026 (2022/C 466/01).

<sup>35</sup> The percentage refers to those who took part in at least one cultural activity such as going to the cinema, live performances (plays, concerts, operas, ballet and dance performances) or visiting a cultural site, excluding 'don't know' / not answered, during the 12 months prior to the interview. Data are from SILC, Eurostat for the year 2022.



**Map 11: People satisfied with cultural facilities in the city****Cultural facilities in the city**

Cultural facilities such as concert halls, theatres, museums and libraries in the city: total satisfied (%)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Satisfaction is generally high across the cities surveyed, with four out of five residents saying that they are satisfied (81 %). Across Europe, a regional pattern emerges, with a large contiguous region in the north and centre showing high satisfaction, while the south of Europe and the United Kingdom have lower levels of satisfaction. The difference is considerable, with 91 % satisfied in the cities in northern Member States compared to 71 % in the cities in southern Member States. However, various Italian and Spanish cities, such as Turin (IT, 85 %), Bologna (IT, 85 %), Verona (IT, 84 %), Málaga (ES, 79 %) and Barcelona (ES, 79 %) score significantly above their regional average (Map 11).

On average, people living in cities in western and eastern Member States are highly satisfied with local cultural facilities (87 % and 85 %, respectively). Rostock (DE, 70 %) is an outlier, with a share of satisfied residents considerably below the average of cities in western Member States. Outside the EU, the share of satisfied residents is low in cities in the western

Balkans (59 %) and Türkiye (65 %), and high in cities in EFTA countries and the United Kingdom (87 %).

Satisfaction with cultural facilities is not a prerogative of capital cities: the average percentage of satisfied people is higher for non-capital cities (83 %) than for capitals (80 %). This is mainly due to the very good performance of various medium-sized to large cities across Europe, such as Zürich (CH, 97 %), Groningen (NL, 93 %), Gdańsk (PL, 92 %), Malmö (SE, 91 %), Strasbourg (FR, 91 %), Cardiff (UK, 91 %) and Ostrava (NL, 91 %).

Satisfaction with cultural facilities is linked to city size, but the relationship is not monotonic: in cities with fewer than 250 000 inhabitants, 79 % of residents are satisfied. This proportion is considerably higher for cities with between 250 000 and 500 000 inhabitants (at 84 %) but then declines to 82 % for larger cities with between 1 and 5 million inhabitants. The average for the five cities with over 5 million inhabitants is also low (74 %), though this mostly due to the low score of Istanbul (61 %).

It is hard to discern clear regional differences within countries, with the exception of a clear north-south divide in Italy, where people in northern cities are more satisfied than those in southern cities.

The 10 cities with the highest share of residents satisfied with their cultural facilities are in the eastern, northern and western Member States and in EFTA countries (Table 20), scoring between 97 % in Zürich and 91 % in Vienna. The bottom 10 cities are mainly located in southern Member States, the western Balkans and Türkiye.

**Table 20:** People satisfied with cultural facilities in the city, top and bottom 10

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Zürich (CH)	97 %	Valletta (MT)	45 %
Groningen (NL)	93 %	Tirana (AL)	49 %
Tallinn (EE)	93 %	Podgorica (ME)	55 %
Helsinki (FI)	92 %	Skopje (MK)	56 %
Gdańsk (PL)	92 %	Heraklion (EL)	58 %
Reykjavik (IS)	92 %	Diyarbakir (TR)	61 %
Luxembourg (LU)	92 %	Naples (IT)	61 %
Hamburg (DE)	91 %	Palermo (IT)	61 %
Malmö (SE)	91 %	Istanbul (TR)	61 %
Vienna (AT)	91 %	Athens (EL)	63 %

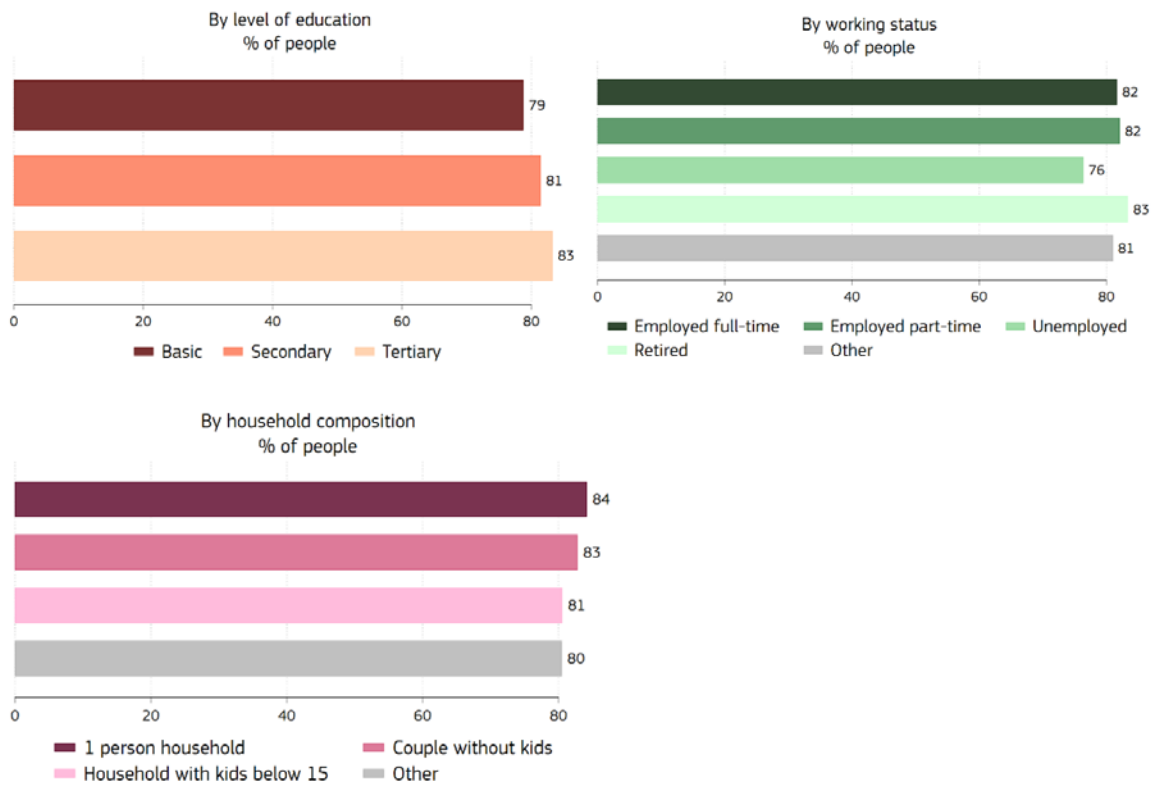
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

The share of satisfied residents increases slightly with the education level, with 79 % of residents with basic education satisfied compared to 81 % and 83 % respectively of those with secondary or tertiary education (Figure 39). This is very much in line with the literature on cultural participation (e.g. Falk and Katz-Gerro, 2016). No large differences were found

between gender and age groups, while some differences can be found between unemployed and retired residents, with a level of satisfaction of 76 % against 83 %, respectively. One-person households are more satisfied with cultural facilities (84 %) than households with children below the age of 15 (81 %).

**Figure 39:** People satisfied with cultural facilities, by socio-demographic groups



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

For the 76 cities for which data from 2019 and 2023 can be compared <sup>(36)</sup>, satisfaction levels decreased in 60 cities and increased or remained stable in the remainder. The cities where levels of satisfaction have increased the most are in southern Member States and Türkiye. Nicosia (CY, 72 %) registers the highest increase in satisfaction (7 pp), followed by Ankara (TR, 68 %) and Valletta (MT, 45 %) where satisfaction increased by 6 pp; nonetheless these levels of satisfaction are below the survey average.

The city that registers the highest decrease in level of satisfaction is Skopje (MK, 56 %, -10 pp), scoring significantly below the survey average. Satisfaction with cultural facilities is stable and above average in cities such as Zürich (CH, 97 %), Liège (BE, 84 %), Verona (IT, 84 %), Tallinn (EE, 93 %), Luxembourg (LU, 92 %) and Cluj-Napoca (RO, 89 %).

<sup>36</sup> For the list of cities for which a comparison is feasible, see page viii.

### **New cultural life for historic factory complex in Rijeka, Croatia**

An abandoned industrial area in Rijeka, Croatia, is being transformed into a modern cultural district housing the city's museum and library, along with a creative space for children. After being abandoned for more than two decades, three buildings in the Rikard Benčić factory complex in Krešimirova Street are being transformed to provide bigger and more suitable accommodation. This will benefit the City Museum of Rijeka, the Rijeka City Library and the Children's House, which is the first such building in Croatia dedicated to the development of creativity in children. The project will help promote cooperation between these three cultural entities. The complex's open space is being revamped for general public use. The institutions, in collaboration with Rijeka's citizens, will plan further development of the cultural district, in line with changing urban needs and developments.

The investment formed part of the Rijeka 2020 European Capital of Culture project and is jointly funded by the European Regional Development Fund, the city and the national government. The total amount of investment for the project is EUR 35 600 000 (HRK 267 701 220), with the European Regional Development Fund contributing EUR 15 800 000 (HRK 119 115 852) through the competitiveness and cohesion operational programme for the 2014–2020 programming period. The investment falls under the 'sustainable urban development' priority.

See also: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/projects/croatia/new-cultural-life-for-historic-factory-complex-in-rijeka-croatia](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/croatia/new-cultural-life-for-historic-factory-complex-in-rijeka-croatia).

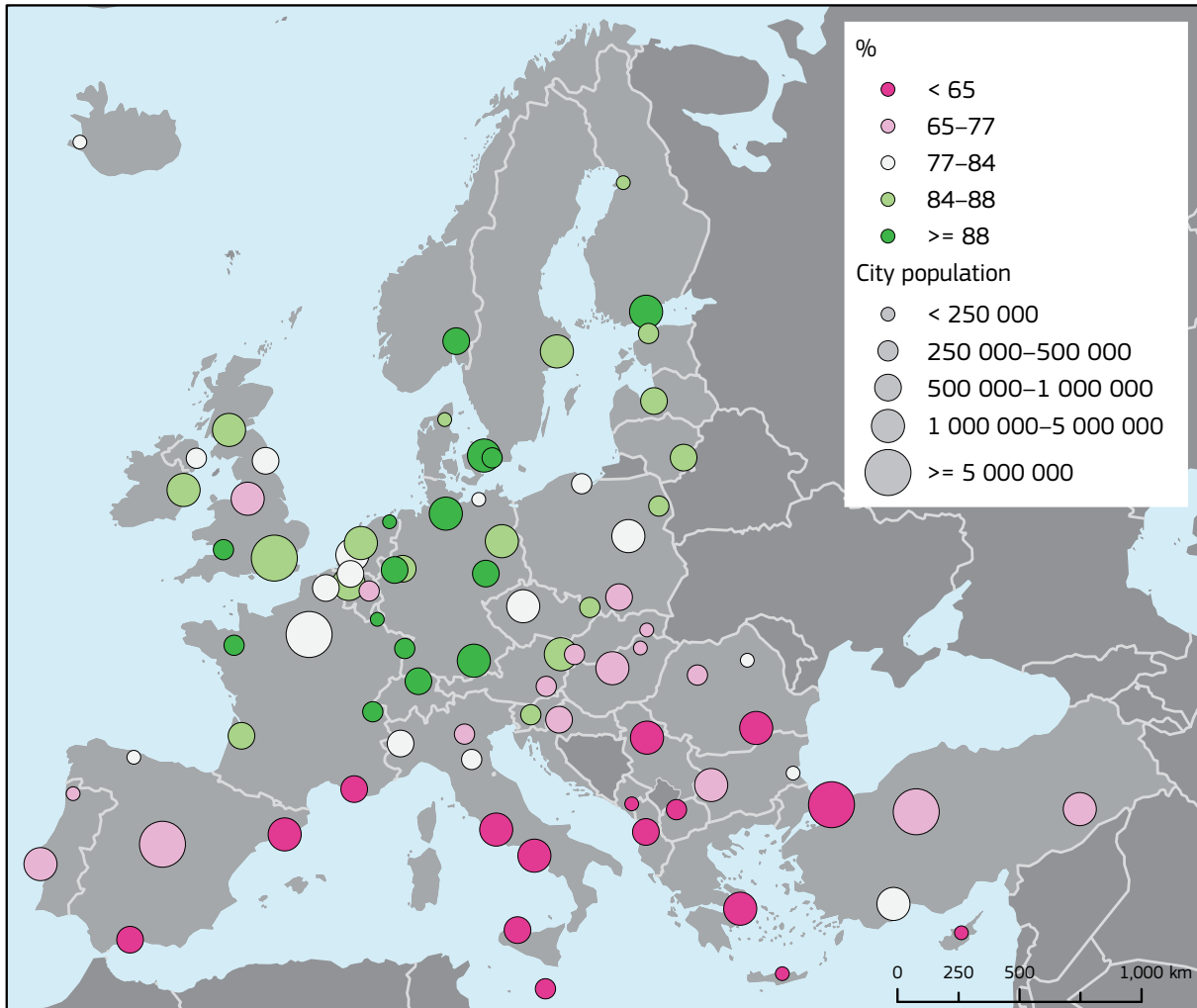
### **Better access to green spaces means greater satisfaction**

Green urban spaces play a vital role in enhancing the quality of life in cities by providing a natural environment for relaxation, social interactions and sports (Lee et al., 2015). Urban green spaces may for instance help to reduce feelings of loneliness of their residents (Astell-Burt et al., 2021). Furthermore, these spaces significantly contribute to urban cooling during hot summer months while also helping to mitigate the effects of pollution. In this context, one of the objectives outlined in UN sustainable development goal 11 is to ensure universal accessibility to safe and inclusive green and public spaces, 'offering opportunities to enrich health and the quality of life for all people living in cities' (Daniel, 2015).

In the cities of the survey, four out of five residents (76 %) are satisfied with the green spaces, such as parks and gardens, in their city. Satisfaction with green spaces follows a similar regional pattern to that of satisfaction with cultural facilities. Cities in southern Member States and those in the western Balkans and Türkiye have satisfaction rates below the survey average, 60 %, 47 % and 70 %, respectively (Map 12). Nevertheless, several cities in southern Member States score well, including Bologna (84 %) and Turin (82 %) in Italy and Oviedo (80 %) in Spain. On the other hand, a few cities in western Member States score poorly – Marseille (FR, 65 %) and Graz (AT, 74 %) – compared to an average of 84 %. Overall, people living in capital cities (73 %) are less satisfied than those in non-capital cities (78 %).

In some countries, the difference between cities is considerable. For example, in Italy, the best-performing city, Bologna (84 %), scores 56 pp higher than the lowest scoring city, Naples (31 %). Other countries with large differences between the best- and worst-performing city include Türkiye (28 pp), France (24 pp) and Spain (16 pp).

Map 12: People satisfied with green spaces in the city



### Green spaces in the city

Green spaces such as parks and gardens in my city: total satisfied (%)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

NB: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Geneva (CH) has the highest share of residents satisfied with the green spaces in the city at 94 % (Table 21). At the other extreme, less than three out of ten people living in Naples (IT, 31 %) and Heraklion (EL, 32 %) are satisfied. For cities for which a comparison with data from the 2019 survey can be made, cities included in the top and bottom groups remain stable over time. However, the cities of Geneva (CH, 94 %) and Oslo (NO, 91 %) are now in the top three cities with the highest

scores, together with Malmö (SE, 92 %), which is one position lower compared to 2019. Across all cities, Bratislava (SK, 66 %, + 11 pp) and Ankara (TR, 75 %, + 6 pp) report the greatest increase in satisfaction. On the other hand, Skopje (MK, 36 %), with a – 8 pp decline, and Belgrade (RS, 57 %), Zagreb (HR, 76 %), Piatra Neamț (RO, 78 %), Ostrava (CZ, 84 %) and London (UK, 87 %), all with a – 6 pp decline, report the largest drop compared to their 2019 values.

**Table 21:** People satisfied with green spaces in the city, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Geneva (CH)	94 %	Naples (IT)	31 %
Malmö (SE)	92 %	Heraklion (EL)	32 %
Oslo (NO)	91 %	Palermo (IT)	34 %
Munich (DE)	91 %	Skopje (MK)	36 %
Helsinki (FI)	90 %	Athens (EL)	37 %
Groningen (NL)	90 %	Tirana (AL)	38 %
Hamburg (DE)	89 %	Valletta (MT)	43 %
Copenhagen (DK)	89 %	Istanbul (TR)	53 %
Cardiff (UK)	89 %	Podgorica (ME)	55 %
Rennes (FR)	89 %	Nicosia (CY)	56 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

People tend to be more satisfied in cities with greater access to green urban areas, as defined in Chapter 2. Across all cities, as already observed in 2019, more people with access to green space means more people satisfied with the green spaces in the city<sup>37</sup>. Yet, some outliers can still be observed<sup>38</sup>.

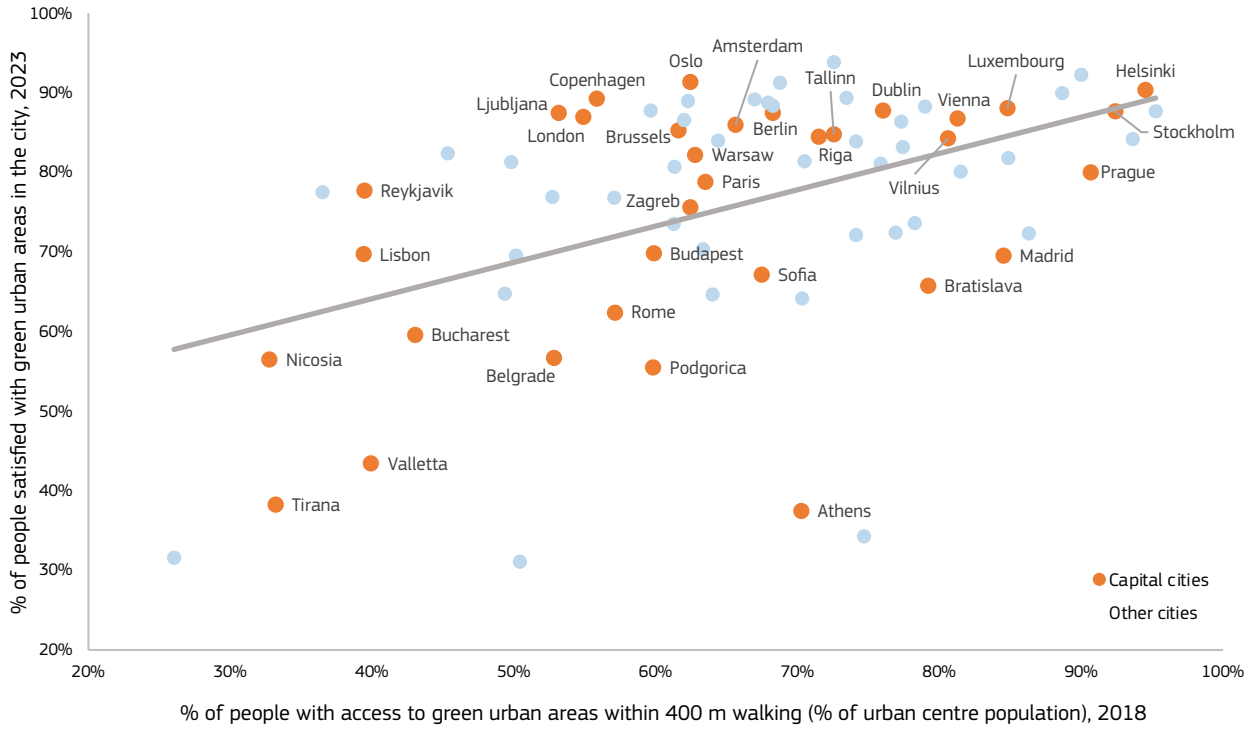
The distribution of green spaces across the city is what drives access to them. Cities with a large proportion of land dedicated to green urban areas can still have low levels of accessibility, if these spaces are not widely distributed. Large green areas in (affluent) low-density neighbourhoods provide access to fewer people than a smaller park in a high-density neighbourhood (Poelman, 2018).

Lacking access, however, is not the only thing that matters. For example, in Glasgow (UK) and Braga (PT), about 77 % of the population have access to green spaces within a short walking distance, although their satisfaction rates differ widely: 86 % for Glasgow compared to 44 % for Braga. Other factors, including quality and maintenance, may be the reason behind these differences.

<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the positive association of access to green areas with people's satisfaction with green spaces is also confirmed using micro data from the survey, by a multivariate regression that identifies a significant positive relationship, also after controlling for gender, age and education.

<sup>38</sup> Reykjavik (IS) has a relatively low share of citizens with access to urban green areas (39 %), but also a clear above-average satisfaction level (78 %). This may be due to high-quality, green spaces which are nearby but beyond a short walking distance.

**Figure 40:** People satisfied with green spaces in the city versus access to green areas



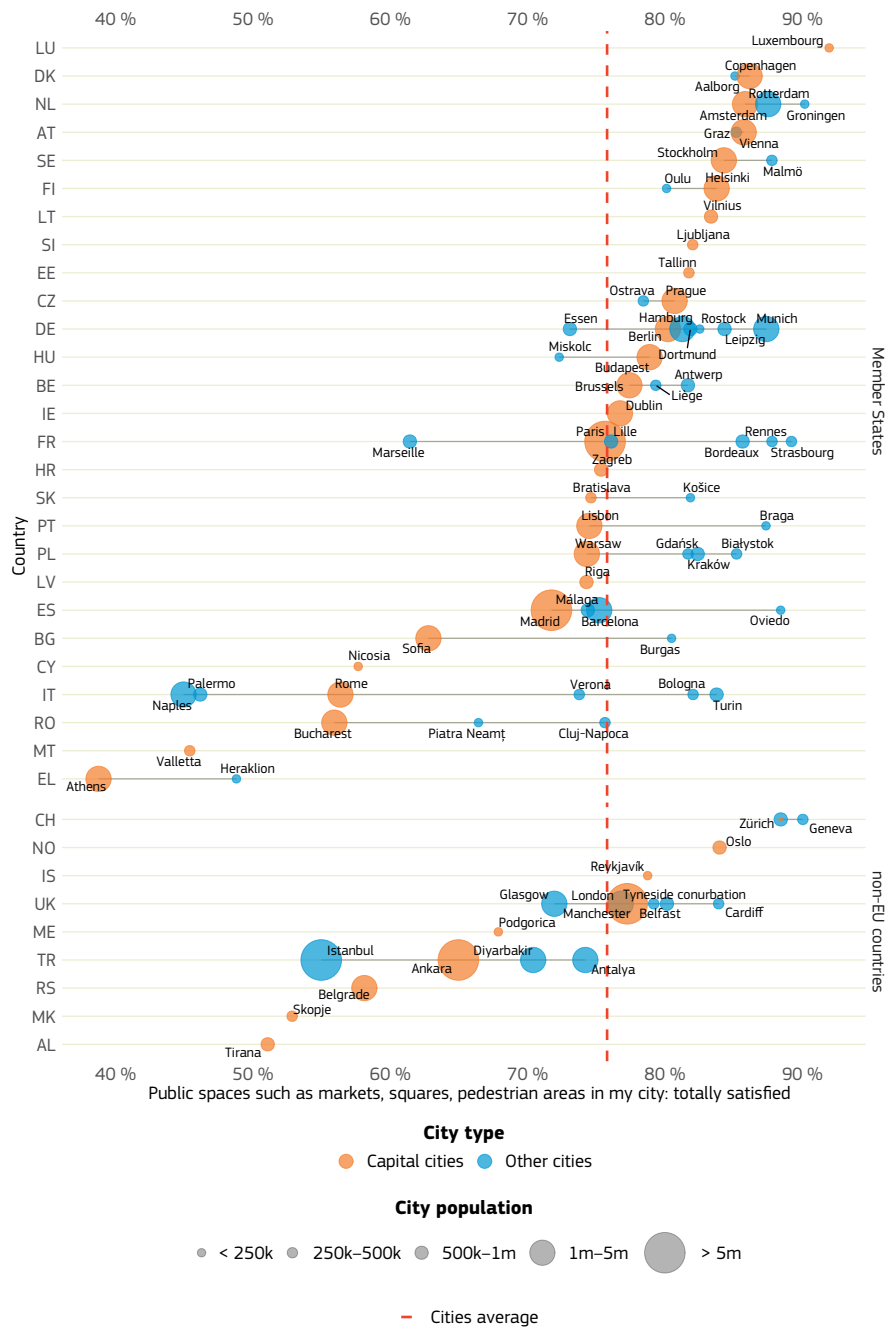
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*; DG Regional and Urban Policy and Joint Research Centre elaborations. Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). Accessibility to green spaces is measured as the share of citizens with easy access to green areas (Source: Poelman, 2021).

### People in non-capital cities are more satisfied with their public spaces

In the cities in the survey, residents were asked about their satisfaction with public spaces such as markets, squares and pedestrian areas in their city or area. About four out of five residents (76 %) are satisfied with public spaces. Fewer people in cities in the western Balkans (57 %) and Türkiye (66 %) and

in southern Member States (66 %) are satisfied (Figure 41). The highest satisfaction levels are found in cities in northern and western Member States (85 % and 82 %, respectively) and in EFTA countries and the United Kingdom (81 %). The share of residents satisfied is smaller in capital cities (72 %) than in non-capital cities (78 %).

Figure 41: People satisfied with public spaces, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Intra-country differences between cities are large in Bulgaria, France, Italy and Romania (Figure 41). With nine out of ten residents satisfied with the public space in their city, Luxembourg (LU), Groningen (NL) and Geneva (CH) have the highest scores (Table 22). At the bottom, less than five out of ten residents are satisfied in Athens (EL, 39 %), Naples (IT, 45 %), Valletta (MT, 45 %), Palermo (IT, 46 %) and Heraklion (EL, 49 %).



**Table 22:** People satisfied with public spaces in the city, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Luxembourg (LU)	92 %	Athens (EL)	39 %
Groningen (NL)	90 %	Naples (IT)	45 %
Geneva (CH)	90 %	Valletta (MT)	45 %
Strasbourg (FR)	89 %	Palermo (IT)	46 %
Zürich (CH)	88 %	Heraklion (EL)	49 %
Oviedo (ES)	88 %	Tirana (AL)	51 %
Rennes (FR)	88 %	Skopje (MK)	53 %
Malmö (SE)	88 %	Istanbul (TR)	55 %
Rotterdam (NL)	88 %	Bucharest (RO)	56 %
Munich (DE)	87 %	Rome (IT)	56 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

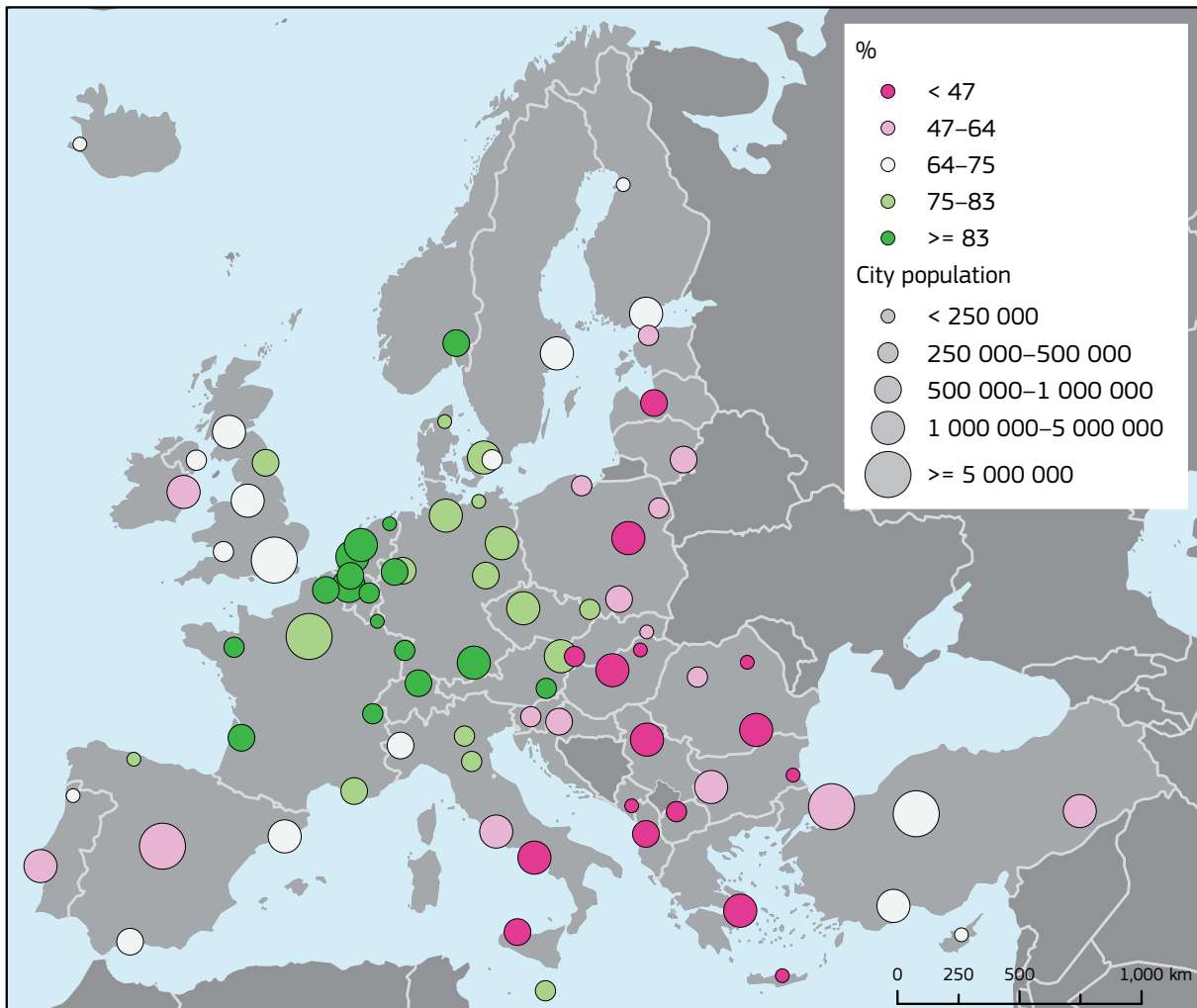
In cities for which a comparison can be made with 2019 data, a general decrease in satisfaction with public spaces is observed, and it is more pronounced in EFTA and UK cities (– 3 pp), with London (UK) and Manchester (UK) registering a decline of – 9 pp and – 6 pp, respectively, and in western Balkan cities (– 3 pp), with a decrease of – 6 pp in Podgorica (ME) and of – 4 pp in Belgrade (RS). Compared to 2019, a larger decline in the level of satisfaction can be seen in capital cities compared to non-capital ones: – 2 pp against – 1 pp. Increases in satisfaction are observed in the capital cities of Bratislava (SK, 75 %, + 5 pp), Oslo (NO, 84 %, + 2 pp), Copenhagen (DK, 86 %, + 2 pp), Luxembourg (LU, 92 %, + 2 pp), Lisbon (PT, 74 %, + 1 pp) and Dublin (IE, 77 %, + 1 pp).

### People in capital cities are less satisfied with healthcare

In the European Union, in 2022, over 20 % of the population is aged 65 or above <sup>(39)</sup>. The projected increase in this demographic emphasises the importance of a well-functioning healthcare system. The challenges brought to the forefront during the COVID-19 pandemic also contributed to highlight the critical importance of healthcare and to shape residents' attitudes towards healthcare providers.

Residents' opinions about the local healthcare system serve as a valuable indicator of whether the system aligns with people's expectations or falls short. This survey asks residents what their level of satisfaction with local healthcare services, doctors and hospitals is.

<sup>39</sup> Source: Eurostat, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population\\_structure\\_and\\_ageing](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population_structure_and_ageing).

**Map 13: People satisfied with healthcare facilities in the city****Health care in the city**

Health care services, doctors and hospitals in my city: total satisfied (%)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Across all cities, seven out of ten residents are satisfied with local healthcare services, although there are large differences between cities. For example, almost nine out of ten residents in cities in western Member States (84 %) are satisfied, compared to only five out of ten residents in cities in eastern Member States (53 %) (Map 13). Outside the EU, satisfaction is highest in cities in the EFTA area and the United Kingdom (76 %) and lowest in cities in the western Balkans (37 %) and Türkiye (64 %).

The Czech cities in the survey – Prague (82 %) and Ostrava (80 %) – score well above the average of cities in eastern Member States. Similarly, the Italian cities of Bologna (80 %) and Verona (77 %) have satisfaction rates well above the average of cities in southern Member States (61 %).

At 62 %, people living in capital cities are less satisfied with healthcare provision than those living in non-capital cities (71 %).

Most countries with at least two cities in the survey have small differences between their best and worst scores. The only exception is Italy, which has a gap of 43 pp between Bologna (80 %) and Palermo (37 %).

Across all cities, satisfaction is highest in Zürich (CH, 93 %), closely followed by Groningen (NL, 92 %). In all the top 10 cities, satisfaction rates are higher than 86 %. At the other end of the spectrum, in cities in the bottom 10, less than half of respondents are satisfied with the healthcare services available in their city. Skopje (MK, 27 %), Miskolc (HU, 35 %) and Podgorica (ME, 36 %) have the three lowest levels of satisfaction (Table 23).

**Table 23:** People satisfied with healthcare services in the city, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Zürich (CH)	93 %	Skopje (MK)	27 %
Groningen (NL)	92 %	Miskolc (HU)	35 %
Antwerp (BE)	91 %	Podgorica (ME)	36 %
Geneva (CH)	91 %	Palermo (IT)	37 %
Liège (BE)	89 %	Budapest (HU)	38 %
Munich (DE)	89 %	Naples (IT)	39 %
Luxembourg (LU)	88 %	Athens (EL)	39 %
Amsterdam (NL)	88 %	Belgrade (RS)	41 %
Oslo (NO)	88 %	Piatra Neamț (RO)	45 %
Brussels (BE)	87 %	Bucharest (RO)	45 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

For the 76 cities for which a comparison with 2019 data is possible, the largest increase can be observed in Warsaw (PL, 47 %, + 6 pp), however the level of satisfaction is below the survey average (67 %). Conversely, the largest decreases are observed in Ljubljana (SI, 54 %, – 16 pp) and Podgorica (ME, 36 %, – 12 pp), consistent with a general decline of – 7 pp in western Balkan countries.

While cities at the top did not experience significant changes between 2019 and 2023, some of those at the bottom report significant differences in satisfaction rates in 2023, as is the case of Miskolc (HU, 35 %, – 6 pp) and Skopje (MK, 27 %, – 8 pp), which is still the city with the lowest level of satisfaction.

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## Chapter 6: Healthy cities

Ambient air pollution is a major environmental cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide, including in Europe, where it remains the largest environmental health risk (European Environmental Agency (EEA), 2022). Air pollution significantly affects human health (Brunekreef and Holgate, 2002; Kampa and Castanas, 2008). During periods of high ozone and particulate matter (PM) levels, individuals are advised to limit vigorous activities to safeguard their well-being. Moreover, prolonged exposure to air pollution can have substantial long-term consequences on health (Anderson, 2020).

Despite improvements in air quality over the past decade, around 95 % of the urban population in the EU was exposed to levels of fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) above the health-based guideline level set by the World Health Organization. In 2020, exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub> is estimated to have resulted in around 275 000 premature deaths (EEA, 2022) <sup>(40)</sup>.

Health problems can also be connected to noise pollution. Noise pollution causes at least 11 000 cases of premature death in Europe each year, with almost 18 million adults annoyed by noise pollution and a further 5 million suffering from sleep disturbance <sup>(41)</sup>. According to the World Health Organization, long-term exposure to such levels can trigger elevated blood pressure and heart attacks (WHO Europe, 2018).

Older people, children and people with fragile health are at a higher risk of experiencing environmental health threats compared to the broader population (EEA, 2018). Furthermore, individuals belonging to lower socioeconomic status groups, such as the unemployed and people with low income or lower levels of education, often face more severe impacts from environmental health risks. This is primarily because they experience higher exposure levels and increased vulnerability, particularly in urban settings.

The level of cleanliness in a city plays a significant role in shaping its attractiveness and reputation, impacting both residents and visitors alike. It also has a direct influence on residents' satisfaction with public areas, their perception of the quality of public services, and their overall satisfaction with the city they call home.

This chapter presents results on residents' satisfaction concerning the air quality, noise levels and cleanliness of their city and how this has changed over time.

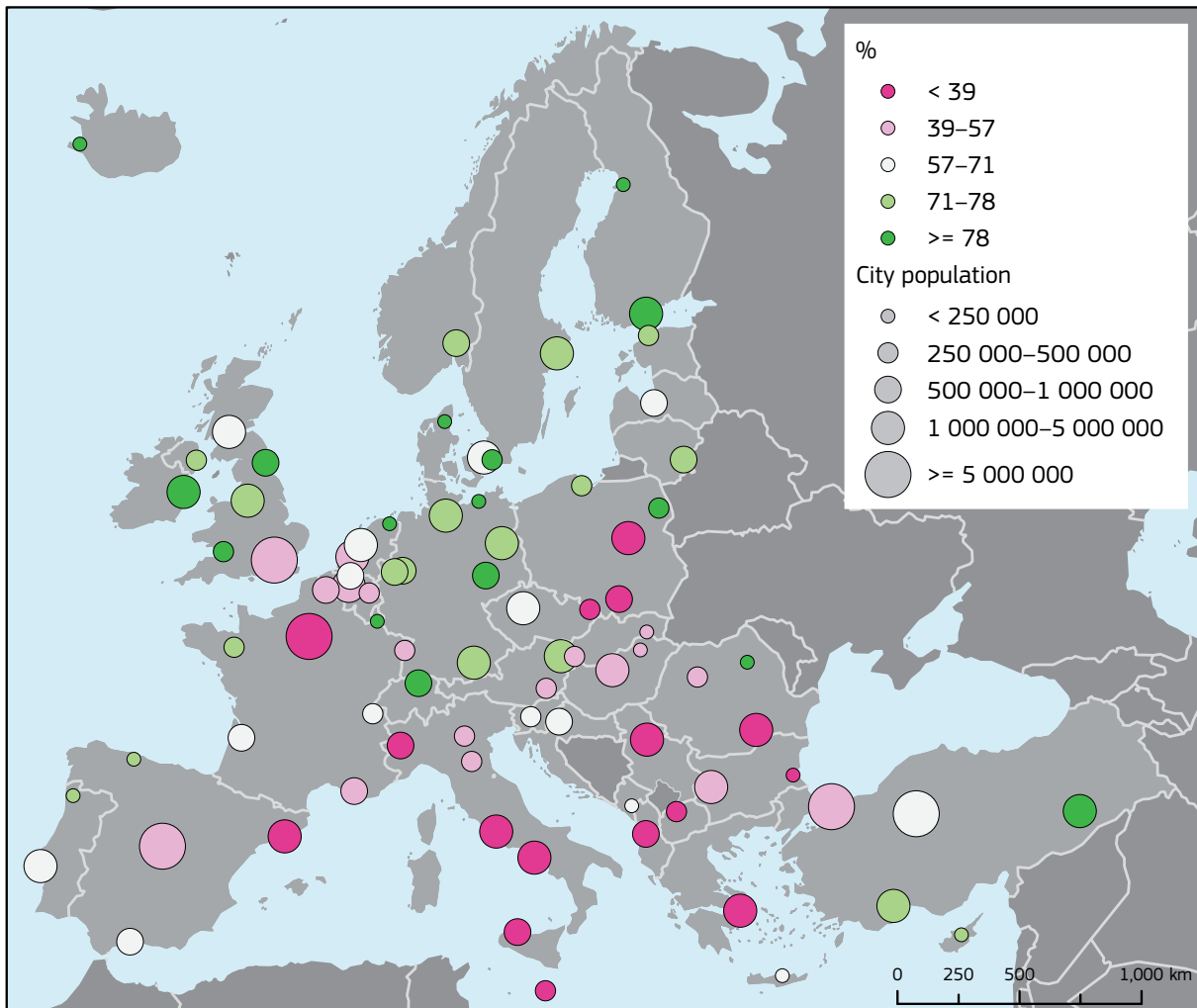
### More residents are concerned about air quality in cities in southern and eastern Member States

Concerns about air quality are more prominent in cities in southern and eastern Member States (Map 14), where only about half of the residents (48 % and 54 %, respectively) are satisfied with air quality compared to an overall average of 60 %. For the group of cities in the western Balkans and Türkiye, the average is 33 % and 67 %, respectively.

Satisfaction with air quality is lower in capital cities than in other cities. Only 56 % of capital-city residents are satisfied compared to 64 % in the other cities. Residents in larger cities are more worried about the quality of the air. On average, 72 % of people living in cities with less than 250 000 inhabitants are satisfied compared to 58 % for cities with 1 to 5 million inhabitants.

<sup>40</sup> Under the European Green Deal's [zero pollution action plan](#), the European Commission set the 2030 goal of reducing the number of premature deaths caused by fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>, a key air pollutant), by at least 55 % compared with 2005 levels.

<sup>41</sup> Source: EEA, available at <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/topics/in-depth/noise>.

**Map 14:** People satisfied with the quality of the air in the city

**Satisfaction with air quality in the city**  
Quality of the air in the city: totally satisfied (%)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Satisfaction with air quality varies a lot between cities, with a difference of 77 pp between the city with the highest and lowest satisfaction rates (Table 24). Residents from Zürich (CH) report the highest satisfaction with air quality (at 89 %), against 12 % for residents living in Skopje (MK). At the top, next to Zürich (CH), more than 88 % of residents are satisfied in Helsinki (FI) and Rostock (DE). At the bottom, there are a number of capital cities, such as Skopje (MK), Bucharest (RO), Paris (FR), Athens (EL), Tirana (AL), Rome (IT) and Belgrade (RS), confirming the trend that people in capital cities are less satisfied with air quality than in other cities (Table 24).

In some countries, the difference between the cities is large. For example, in Poland, the difference between Białystok (85 %) and Kraków (22 %) is 63 pp. In Romania, there is a 62-pp difference between Piatra Neamț (82 %) and Bucharest (20 %); in France, a 47-pp difference between Rennes (73 %) and Paris

(26 %); and in Spain, a 34-pp difference between Oviedo (73 %) and Madrid (39 %).

Compared to the 2019 survey (<sup>42</sup>), the cities with the biggest increase in satisfied citizens with respect to air quality are Sofia (BG, + 14 pp), Burgas, (BG, + 8 pp), Ostrava (CZ, + 8 pp) and Nicosia (CY, + 6 pp). Conversely, the cities where satisfaction concerning air quality has declined the most compared to the 2019 edition are Warsaw (PL, - 12 pp), Bordeaux (FR, - 9 pp), Zagreb (HR, - 9 pp), Ljubljana (SI, - 8 pp), Belgrade (RS, - 8 pp) and Vienna (AT, - 8 pp).

<sup>42</sup> For the list of cities for which a comparison is feasible, see page viii.

**Table 24:** People satisfied with the quality of the air in the city, top and bottom 10 scores

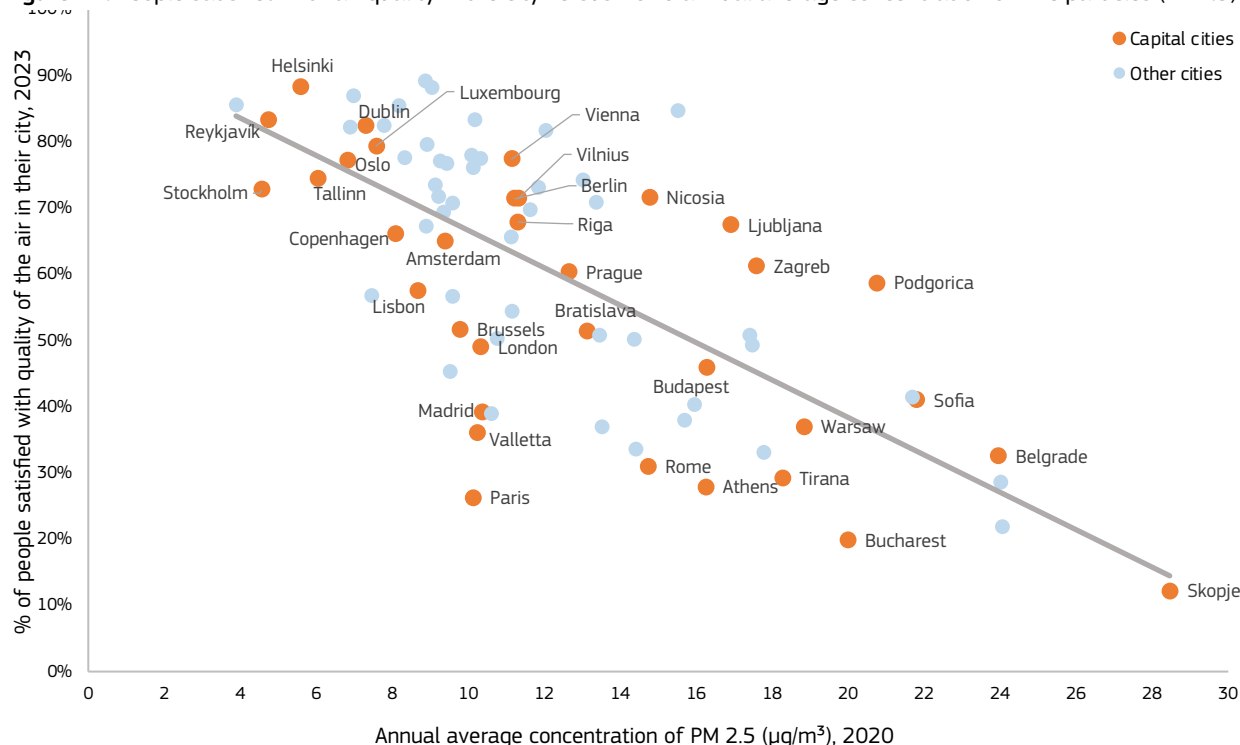
Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Zürich (CH)	89 %	Skopje (MK)	12 %
Helsinki (FI)	88 %	Bucharest (RO)	20 %
Rostock (DE)	88 %	Kraków (PL)	22 %
Aalborg (DK)	87 %	Paris (FR)	26 %
Oulu (FI)	85 %	Athens (EL)	28 %
Groningen (NL)	85 %	Turin (IT)	29 %
Białystok (PL)	85 %	Tirana (AL)	29 %
Reykjavik (IS)	83 %	Rome (IT)	31 %
Leipzig (DE)	83 %	Belgrade (RS)	33 %
Dublin (IE)	82 %	Ostrava (CZ)	33 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

People tend to be less satisfied with air quality in cities with a high level of air pollution (Figure 42)<sup>43</sup>. The observed negative correlation (of around - 0.7) indicates that the perception of residents as regards air pollution tends to reflect the concentrations of air pollutants in cities. In particular, the figure depicts the correlation observed between the percentage of residents satisfied with air quality in their city and PM<sub>2.5</sub> annual

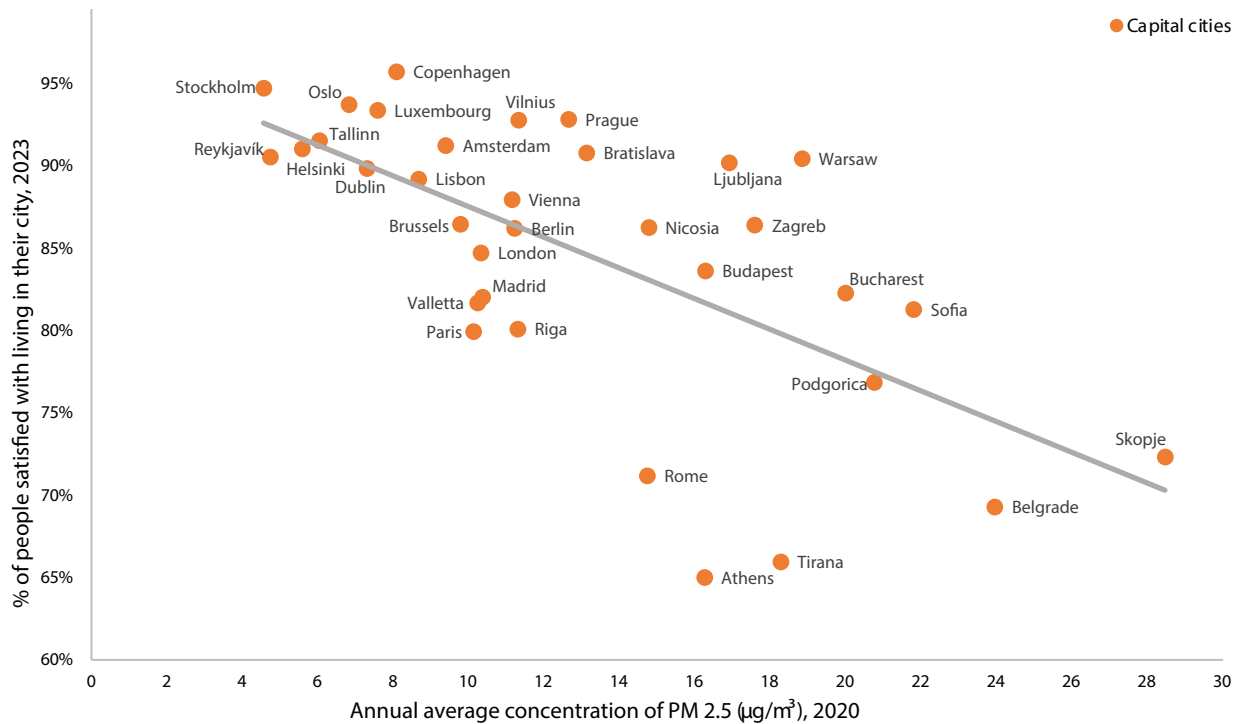
concentrations. Furthermore, especially in capital cities, a strong negative correlation between residents' satisfaction with living in the city and the concentration of PM<sub>2.5</sub> air pollutants present in the area can be observed (Figure 43). This may be attributed to various factors, including higher population density, increased industrial activity, and traffic congestion in these urban centres.

**Figure 42:** People satisfied with air quality in the city versus 2020 annual average concentration of fine particles (PM2.5)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023; DG Regional and Urban Policy and Joint Research Centre elaborations. Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). Concentration of heavy particles is based on EEA air-quality grid data (Air quality indicators 2020) from 80 available cities (no data for Türkiye).

<sup>43</sup> The air-pollution indicator considered here is the annual average concentrations of PM with a diameter of 2.5 µm or less (PM2.5) (source: EEA, <https://disco-map.eea.europa.eu/map/fme/AirQualityExport.htm>).

**Figure 43:** People satisfied with living in capital cities versus 2020 annual average of air-pollution indicator (fine particles, PM2.5)



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*; DG Regional and Urban Policy and Joint Research Centre elaborations. Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). Concentration of heavy particles is based on European Environment Agency (EEA) air-quality grid data (Air quality indicators 2020) from 80 available cities (no data for Türkiye).

### Large cities are louder, according to their residents

On average, two out of three residents are satisfied with the level of noise in their city (63 %). Satisfaction is lower in cities in southern (51 %) and eastern (59 %) Member States and in the western Balkans (46 %) and Türkiye (53 %).

As with air quality, satisfaction with noise levels is higher in non-capital (66 %) than in capital cities (59 %), with the exception of cities in Italy, Spain, Türkiye, Switzerland and Slovakia. The larger the city, the lower the share of residents who are satisfied with the noise level. This is well above the overall average in cities with less than 250 000 inhabitants (71 %). The share decreases as the size increases: it drops to 59 % in cities with between 1 and 5 million inhabitants.

**Table 25:** People satisfied with the noise level in their city, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Oulu (FI)	87 %	Bucharest (RO)	30 %
Dublin (IE)	82 %	Palermo (IT)	31 %
Tyneside conurbation (UK)	82 %	Istanbul (TR)	33 %
Malmö (SE)	82 %	Athens (EL)	36 %
Aalborg (DK)	81 %	Tirana (AL)	36 %
Groningen (NL)	81 %	Skopje (MK)	36 %
Reykjavik (IS)	80 %	Sofia (BG)	38 %
Rostock (DE)	80 %	Naples (IT)	38 %
Helsinki (FI)	80 %	Paris (FR)	43 %
Cardiff (UK)	79 %	Rome (IT)	43 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*. Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.



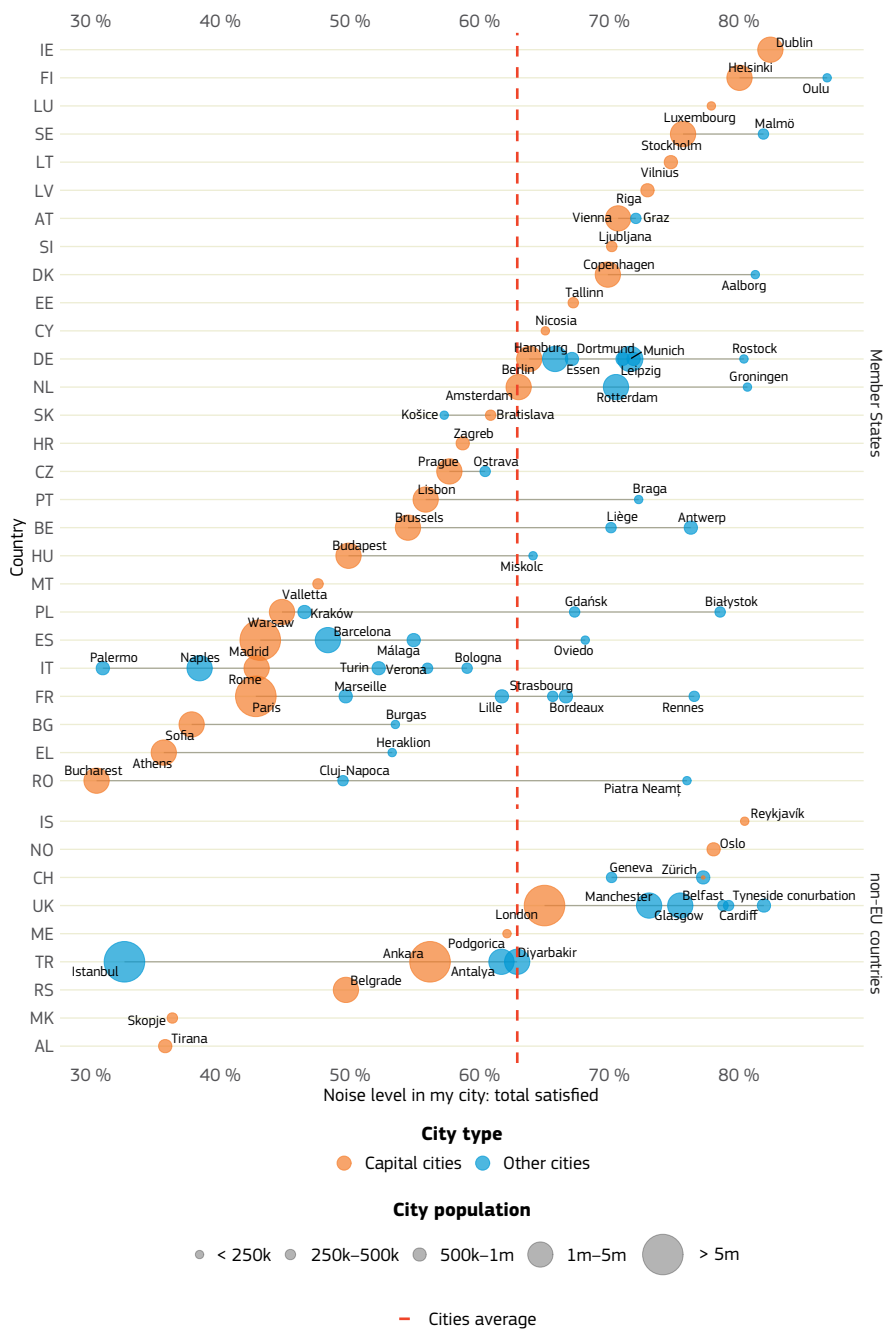
Across all cities in the survey, satisfaction with noise level ranges between 30 % in Bucharest (RO) and 87 % in Oulu (FI). In all the top 10 cities, about four out of five city residents or more are satisfied with the noise level. On the other hand, in the bottom 10 cities, less than half of the city residents are satisfied, with Bucharest (RO), Palermo (IT) and Istanbul (TR) having less than 35 % of satisfied people (Table 25).

satisfaction are Diyarbakir (TR, + 8 pp), Heraklion (EL, + 6 pp) and Barcelona (ES, + 5 pp). Conversely, the cities where the share of satisfied citizens has decreased are Manchester (UK, - 10 pp) and London (UK, - 11 pp).

When comparing these results with those of the 2019 edition of the survey, the cities with the highest increase in noise-level

Intra-country variations are also visible, in particular in Romania, where the percentage of positive responses in Piatra Neamț (76 %) is 46 pp higher than in the capital, Bucharest (30 %) (Figure 44).

Figure 44: People satisfied with the noise level in their city, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023; DG Regional and Urban Policy and Joint Research Centre elaborations. Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

## Smaller cities are cleaner, according to their residents

Around six out of ten city residents on average are satisfied with the cleanliness of the city where they live (59 %). Satisfaction is below the overall average in cities in southern Member States (46 %) and in the western Balkans (41 %). On average, capital cities have fewer satisfied residents (55 %) compared to non-capital cities (62 %). Satisfaction also decreases with city size, as it did for air quality and noise. While around 69 % of people are satisfied in cities with less than

250 000 inhabitants, the share drops to 54 % in cities with between 1 and 5 million inhabitants.

The level of satisfaction with the cleanliness of the city varies widely, from more than 90 % in Luxembourg (LU, 93 %) to 6 % in Palermo (IT) (Table 26). At the top, next to Luxembourg (LU), more than 85 % of people are satisfied in Białystok (PL, 89 %), Zürich (CH, 89 %) and Oviedo (ES, 88 %). Luxembourg (LU), Vienna (AT) and Ljubljana (SI) are the only capital cities in the top 10. In several capital cities, a low share of residents are satisfied with cleanliness: Rome (IT, 11 %), Athens (EL, 34 %), Sofia (BG, 35 %), Paris (FR, 36 %) and Belgrade (RS, 38 %).

**Table 26:** People satisfied with cleanliness in the city, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Luxembourg (LU)	93 %	Palermo (IT)	6 %
Białystok (PL)	89 %	Rome (IT)	11 %
Zürich (CH)	89 %	Marseille (FR)	22 %
Oviedo (ES)	88 %	Skopje (MK)	23 %
Munich (DE)	83 %	Naples (IT)	25 %
Oulu (FI)	83 %	Athens (EL)	34 %
Vienna (AT)	83 %	Sofia (BG)	35 %
Groningen (NL)	81 %	Paris (FR)	36 %
Ljubljana (SI)	81 %	Bucharest (RO)	36 %
Aalborg (DK)	80 %	Belgrade (RS)	38 %

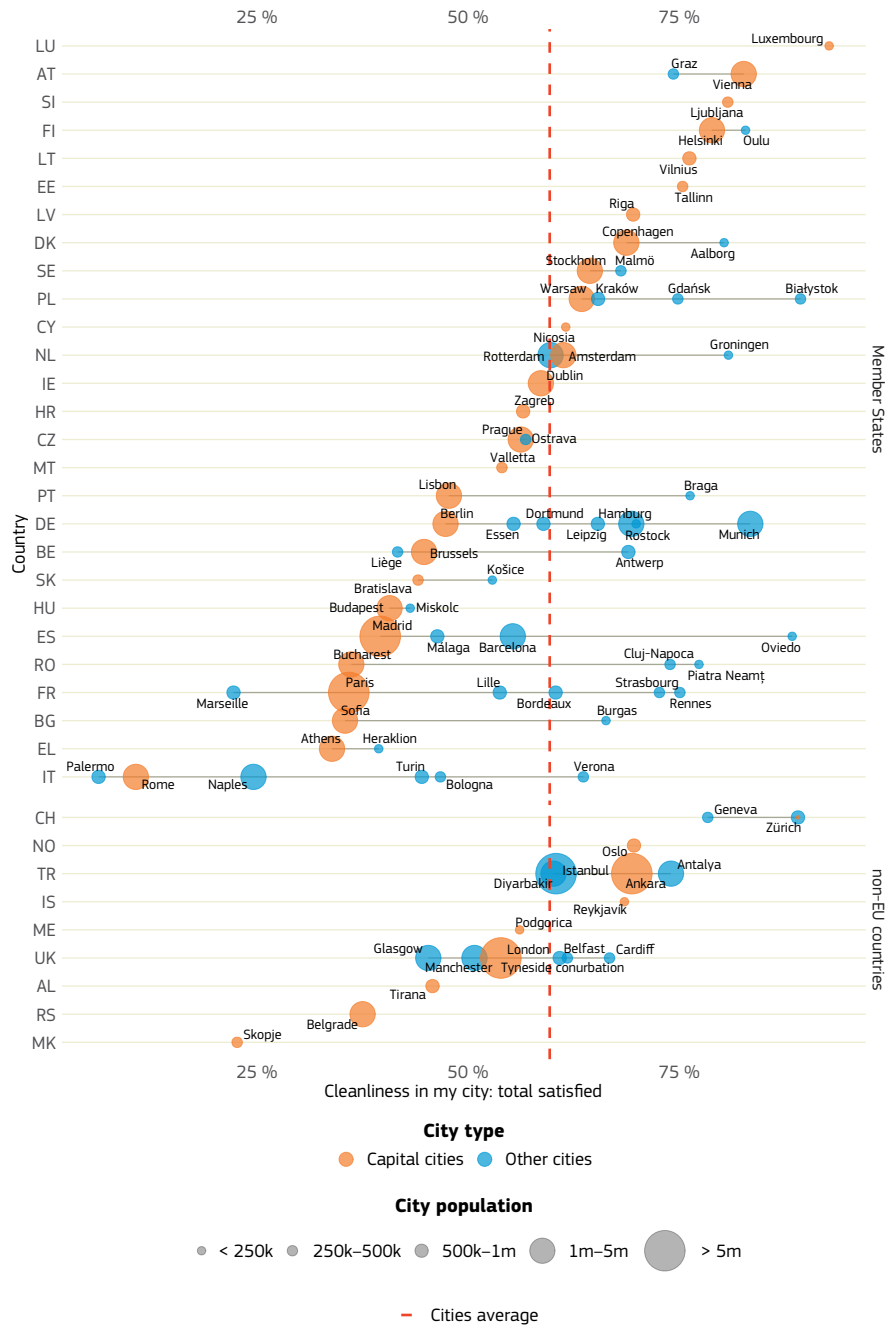
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

Once again, large intra-country variations are visible, especially in Italy, France and Spain (Figure 45). In Italy, there is a difference of 58 pp between the cities of Verona (64 %) and Palermo (6 %); in France, more than 53 pp separates the cities of Rennes (75 %) and Marseille (22 %); and in Spain, there is a difference of 48 pp between the cities of Oviedo (88 %) and Madrid (40 %).

Compared with the results of the 2019 survey, the largest increase in satisfaction can be observed in Bratislava (SK, 13 pp), Ankara (TR, 6 pp), Diyarbakir (TR, 5 pp), Lisbon (PT, 5 pp) and Cluj-Napoca (RO, 5 pp). On the other hand, two UK cities experienced the largest drop in the share of satisfied residents: London (UK, - 13 pp) and Manchester (UK, - 9 pp). Zagreb (HR, - 14 pp) is experiencing a continuous drop, as its share of satisfied residents had also previously fallen between 2015 and 2019 (- 5 pp).

Figure 45: People satisfied with cleanliness in their city, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

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## Chapter 7: Perceived quality of local public administration

Local government plays a crucial role in shaping the lives of citizens. The effectiveness and efficiency of local government are significantly influenced by the quality of institutions in place. Good institutions, characterised by transparency, accountability, rule of law and effective governance structures, have a profound impact on the functioning of local governments, and ultimately on economic development and impact made by public investment, including cohesion policy investments (Acemoglou et al., 2005 and 2014; European Commission, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2013; Rodríguez-Pose and Garcilazo, 2015; Ketterer and Rodríguez-Pose, 2018; Annoni et al., 2019) <sup>(44)</sup>. The quality of local public service provision has been found to relate to higher levels of social trust (Ziller and Andreß, 2022)

The European Commission's cohesion policy places a strong emphasis on local and regional authorities' involvement in economic and social development. Funds, such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF), are channelled to support local projects that enhance administrative capacity, infrastructure and public services. These investments contribute to improving local governance and overall quality of life. By emphasising, for instance, good governance, transparency and digitalisation, these initiatives empower local authorities to provide efficient services, engage with their communities and uphold democratic principles.

Starting from the 2019 edition, the survey asks city residents how they perceive the quality of local public administration in the city where they live. It does so across several dimensions, including timeliness, corruption and how easy is to access information and services online.

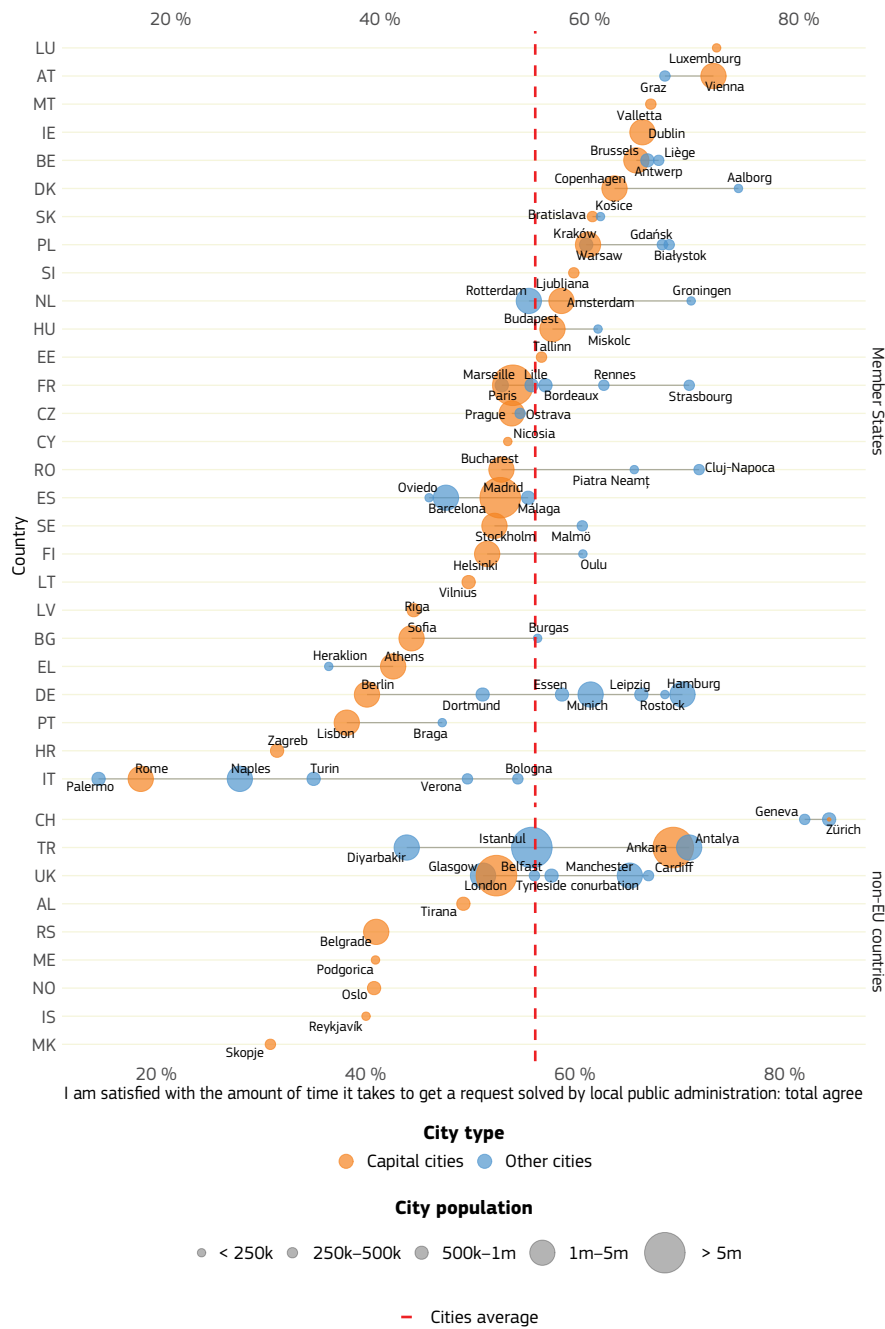
### Non-capital cities are found to resolve requests faster

Only a slight majority of city residents (54 %, versus 56 % in 2019) are satisfied with the time it takes to get a request solved by their local public administration (Figure 46). In the EU, residents from cities in southern Member States have the lowest scores (42 %, stable since 2019), while the highest scores are in cities in western Member States (61 %, it was 63 % in 2019). Results show that, at 61 %, satisfaction is highest in cities between 250 000 and 500 000 inhabitants. Residents of non-capital cities (at 57 %) are more satisfied than those living in capitals (50 %), as already observed in 2019, which may be explained by the fact that in capital cities local public administration may have to deal with temporary increases in the number of requests that are hard to foresee (e.g. migrant inflows).

Large intra-country variations can be observed in Türkiye, Italy and Germany (Figure 46). For Italy and Germany, this large variation can be partially explained by the poor performance of the capital city. Across all cities in the sample, scores range between 83 % for Zürich (CH) and 13 % for Palermo (IT) (Table 27).

<sup>44</sup> For a recent overview of the literature on the relevance of institutions on regional development, including on cities, see Rodríguez-Pose (2020).

**Figure 46:** People satisfied with the time it takes to get a request solved by the local public administration, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

**Table 27:** People satisfied with the time it takes to get a request solved by a city's local public administration, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Zürich (CH)	83 %	Palermo (IT)	13 %
Geneva (CH)	81 %	Rome (IT)	17 %
Aalborg (DK)	74 %	Naples (IT)	27 %
Luxembourg (LU)	72 %	Skopje (MK)	30 %
Vienna (AT)	72 %	Zagreb (HR)	30 %
Cluj-Napoca (RO)	70 %	Turin (IT)	34 %
Groningen (NL)	70 %	Heraklion (EL)	35 %
Strasbourg (FR)	70 %	Lisbon (PT)	37 %
Antalya (TR)	70 %	Reykjavík (IS)	39 %
Hamburg (DE)	69 %	Berlin (DE)	39 %

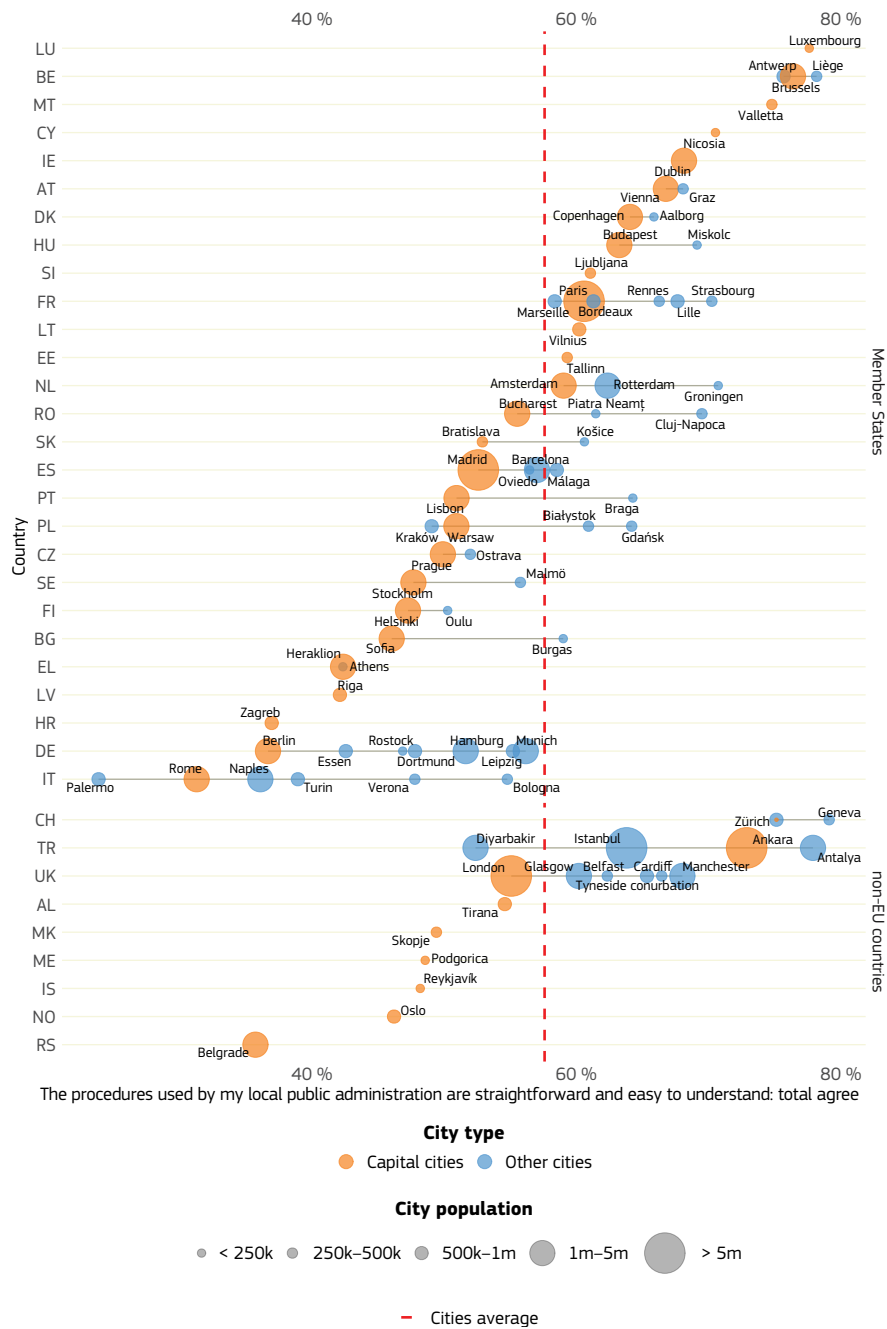
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

## Local public administration procedures in the capital are harder to follow

Around six out of ten city residents consider that the procedures followed by the local public administration in their city are straightforward and easy to follow. Again, non-capital cities appear to do better than capital cities, with around 59 % of residents agreeing compared to 55 % in the capitals (similar to what was observed in 2019). In almost all countries, agreement levels are lowest in the capital ([Figure 47](#)). Across all cities in the sample, scores range between 79 % for Geneva (CH) and 24 % for Palermo (IT) ([Table 28](#)).

**Figure 47:** People agreeing that the procedures used by the city’s local public administration are straightforward and easy to understand, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).



**Table 28:** People agreeing that the procedures used by the city's local public administration are straightforward and easy to understand, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Geneva (CH)	79 %	Palermo (IT)	24 %
Liege (BE)	78 %	Rome (IT)	31 %
Antalya (TR)	78 %	Belgrade (RS)	36 %
Luxembourg (LU)	78 %	Naples (IT)	36 %
Brussels (BE)	76 %	Berlin (DE)	37 %
Antwerp (BE)	76 %	Zagreb (HR)	37 %
Zürich (CH)	75 %	Turin (IT)	39 %
Valletta (MT)	75 %	Rīga (LV)	42 %
Ankara (TR)	73 %	Heraklion (EL)	42 %
Groningen (NL)	71 %	Athens (EL)	42 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

NB: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

## Post COVID-19, more people find it difficult to access the information and services of their local public administration online

In 2021, building on its digital strategy unveiled in 2020 <sup>(45)</sup>, the Commission presented the EU Digital Compass, which set out a vision and a set of targets to foster digitalisation in the EU by 2030 <sup>(46)</sup> <sup>(47)</sup>. One of the targets involves the digitalisation of public services, with the ambition of having all key public services available online by 2030. Digitalisation in public administration enables the streamlined delivery of services to citizens. Online platforms and digital portals provide convenient access to government services, reducing bureaucratic red tape and long waiting times. In the current 2021–2027

programming period, 'Cohesion policy has planned more than EUR 40 billion of investment in digitisation through the 2021–2027 programmes funded by ERDF, ESF+, the Cohesion Fund and Just Transition Fund' <sup>(48)</sup>.

The survey asked city residents whether the information and services of their local public administration could be easily accessed online. At 74 %, around three out of four city residents agreed, 2 pp lower than in 2019. Across all cities, scores range between 90 % for Zürich (CH) and 50 % for Palermo (IT) (see [Table 29](#)).

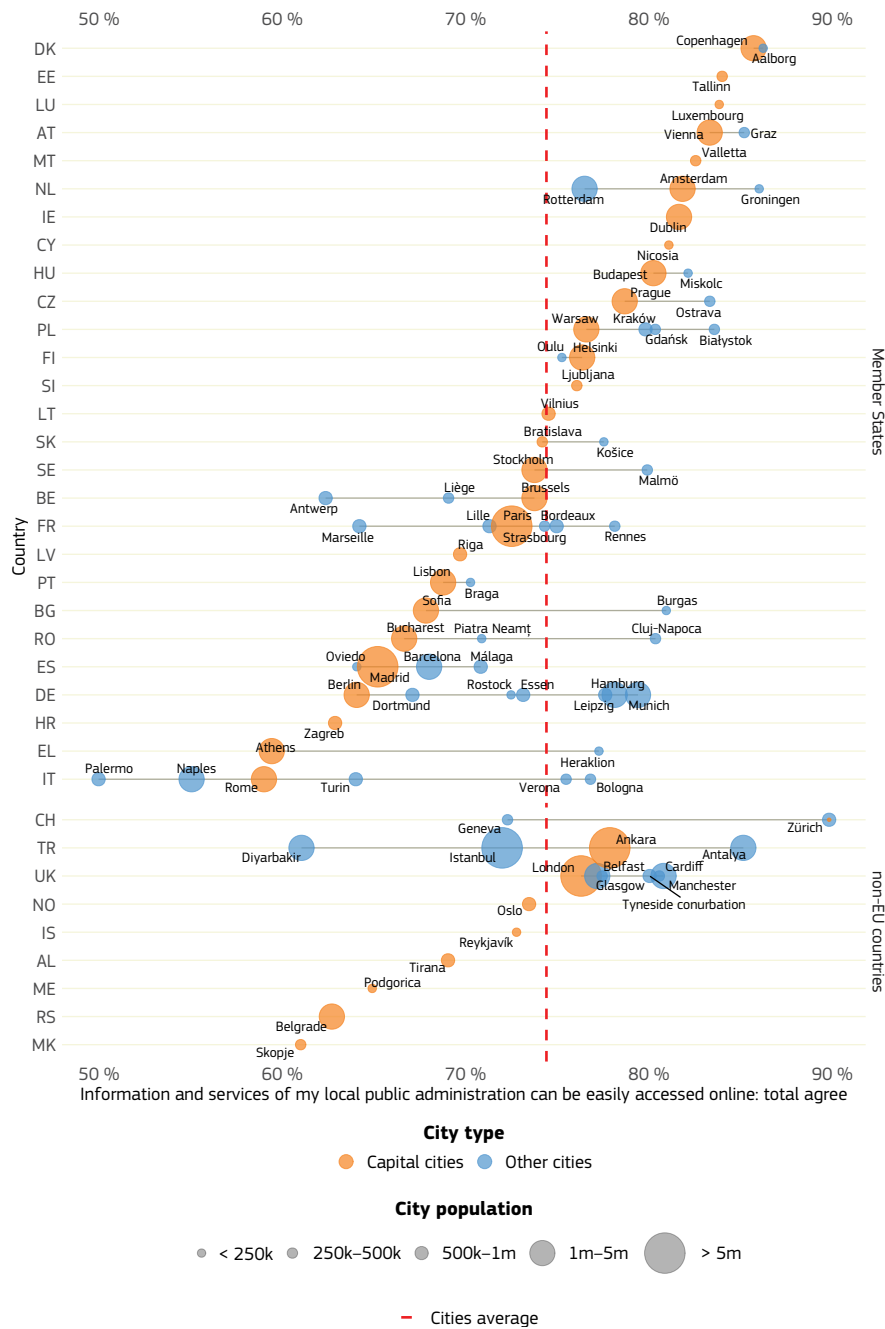
<sup>45</sup> European Commission (2020), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Shaping Europe's digital future (COM(2020) 67).

<sup>46</sup> European Commission (2021), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: 30 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade (COM(2021) 118 final).

<sup>47</sup> In 2021, 54 % of EU citizens aged 16–74 had at least basic overall digital skills, 26 pp below the 2030 target set in the Digital Compass (Source: Eurostat [isoc\_sk\_dskl\_i21]).

<sup>48</sup> Source: ESIF Open data: Cohesion policy supporting the digital transition 2021–2027: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/Cohesion-policy-supporting-the-digital-transition/~vaxt-7rsr>.

**Figure 48:** People agreeing that the information and services of their local public administration are easy to access online, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

**Table 29:** People agreeing that the information and services of the city's local public administration can be easily accessed online, top and bottom 10 scores

Top 10 (highest score first)		Bottom 10 (lowest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Zürich (CH)	90 %	Palermo (IT)	50 %
Aalborg (DK)	86 %	Naples (IT)	55 %
Groningen (NL)	86 %	Rome (IT)	59 %
Copenhagen (DK)	86 %	Athens (EL)	59 %
Graz (AT)	85 %	Skopje (MK)	61 %
Antalya (TR)	85 %	Diyarbakir (TR)	61 %
Tallinn (EE)	84 %	Antwerp (BE)	62 %
Luxembourg (LU)	84 %	Belgrade (RS)	63 %
Białystok (PL)	84 %	Zagreb (HR)	63 %
Ostrava (CZ)	83 %	Turin (IT)	64 %

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit.

On average, results from the survey show that cities in northern (at 80 %, stable from 2019), western (at 75 %, it was 78 % in 2019) and eastern (at 77 %, stable from 2019) Member States tend to have higher shares of residents agreeing that online access is easy (Figure 48). With a 2 pp difference, satisfaction is higher in non-capital cities (75 %) than in capital cities (73 %). Large intra-country differences can be observed in Türkiye, Italy and Greece.

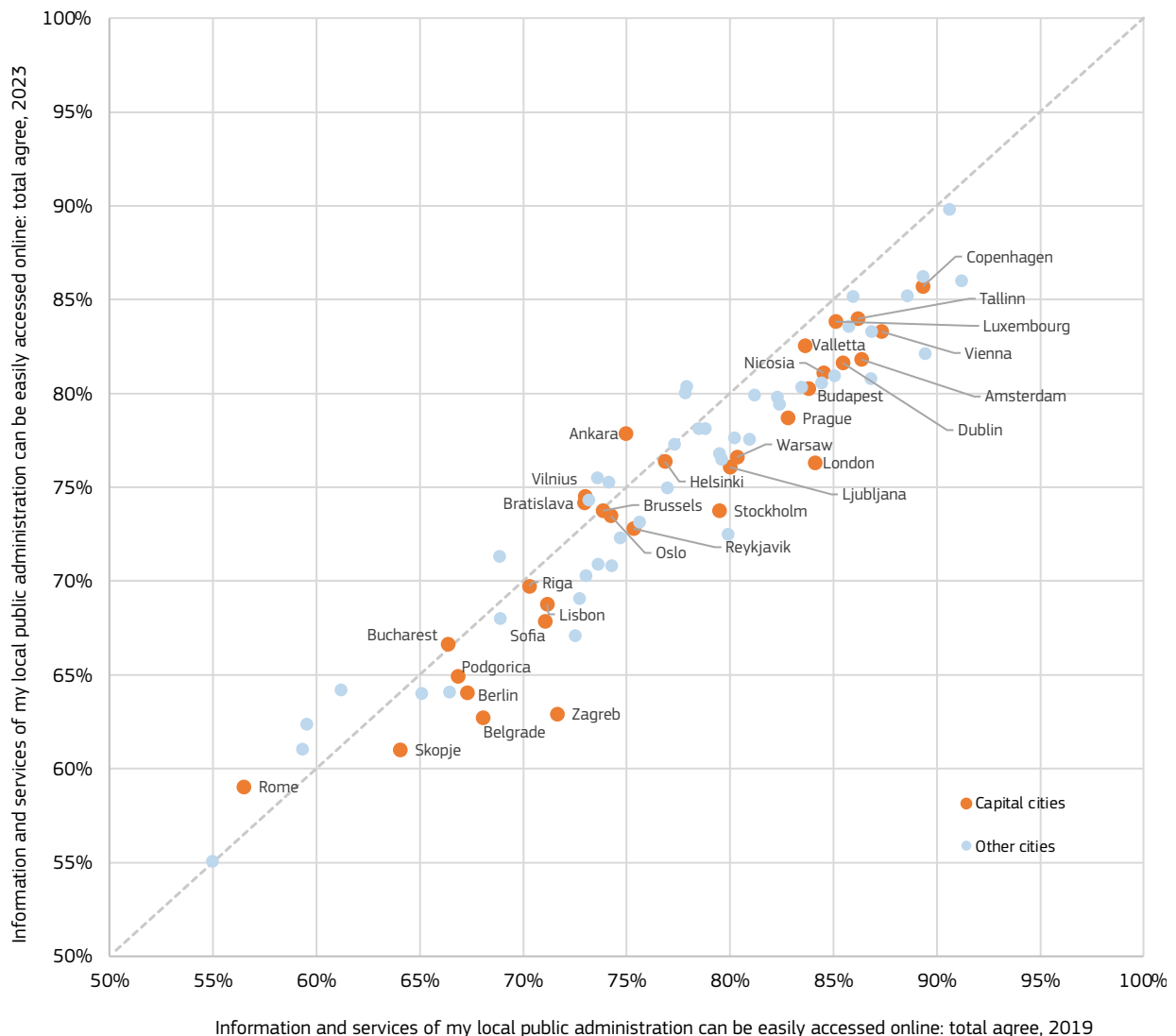
The pandemic sped up the pace of digital transformation in the EU. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the containment measures put in place, citizens were forced to use the Internet to an increased extent, boosting digitalisation in the public

sector as well (European Commission, 2021). As a result, the percentage of individuals interacting online with public authorities has also steadily increased since 2019 (49). At the same time, the pandemic has exacerbated the existing inequalities in digital skills, despite the increased use of ICT (van Deursen, 2020). In line with these findings, the results of the survey clearly show a clear deterioration – in 66 of the 73 cities for which a time comparison can be made (50) – in the percentage of respondents declaring that the information and services of their local public administration were easily accessible online (Figure 49). The decrease was sharpest in Zagreb (HR, – 9 pp), London (UK, – 8 pp), Rostock (DE, – 7 pp) and Miskolc (HU, – 7 pp).

49. Source: Eurostat: (lsoc\_ciegi\_ac)

50. For the list of cities for which a comparison is feasible, see page viii.

**Figure 49:** People agreeing that the information and services of their local public administration are easy to access online, comparison between 2019 and 2023



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). The dashed line is a 45-degree line (no change between 2019 and 2023). The chart only includes cities for which a time comparison can be made (see page 9).

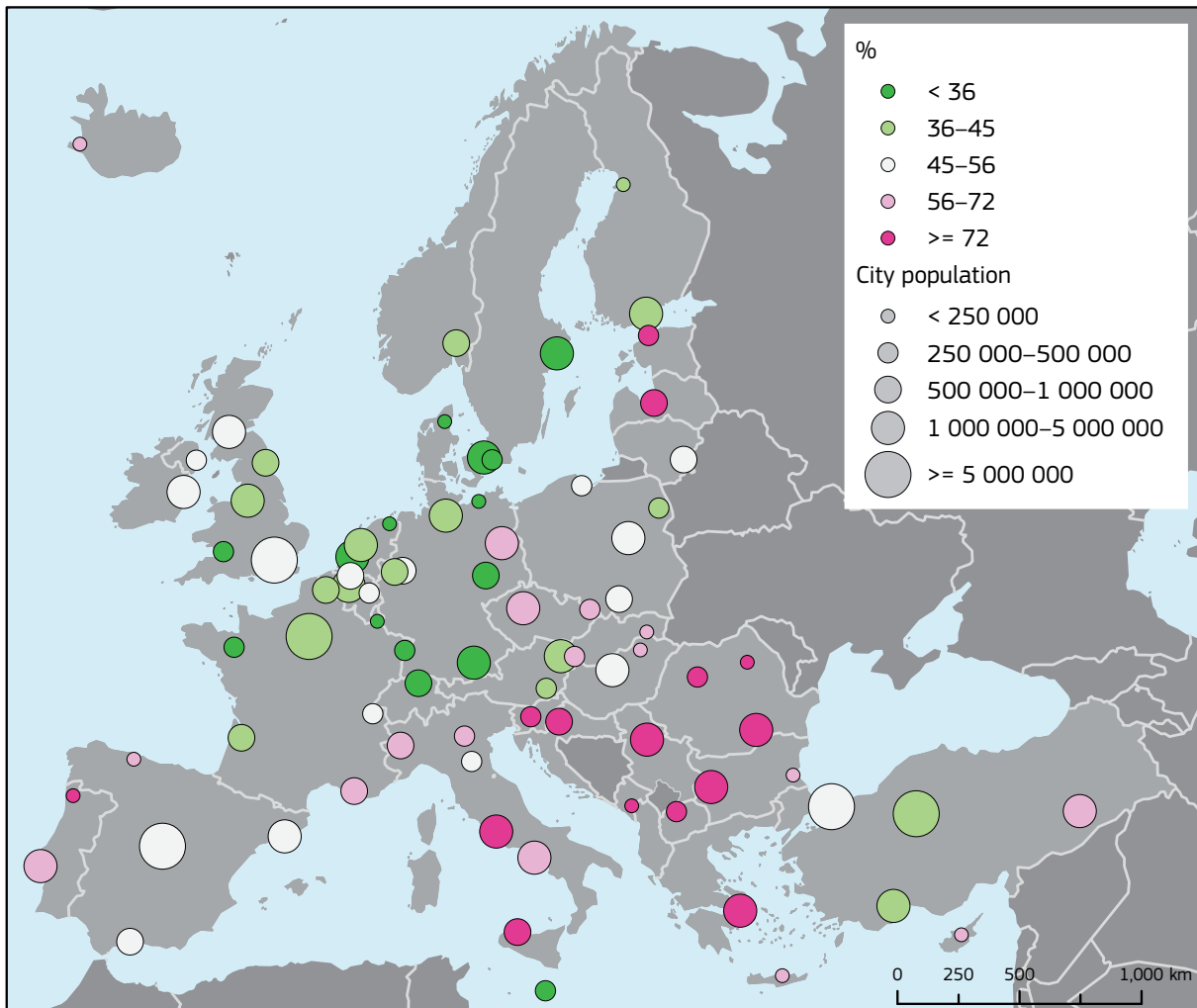
## Perception of local corruption varies widely across European cities and across education levels

Corruption is a significant impediment to the functioning of local governments. When corruption is minimised, resources are allocated more fairly and efficiently, benefiting the community as a whole. Reduced corruption also promotes a favourable environment for investment and economic growth, leading to job creation and increased prosperity (Charron et al., 2014 and 2019; Gründler and Potrafke, 2019). Very recently, in May 2023, the Commission put forward a proposal aiming at establishing stronger rules to fight corruption in the EU and worldwide<sup>51</sup>.

In 2023, when asked about corruption in the local public administration of the city where they live, around half the city residents (53 %) agree that corruption is present in their local public administration, in line with what was found in 2019 (51 %). On average, in the cities in the western Balkans, more than two in three people agree that corruption is present (69 %); the share is almost as high in cities in eastern Member States (65 % – stable compared to 2019). In cities in northern and western Member States, it is much lower (below 40 %) (Map 15).

<sup>51</sup> European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2023), Joint Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: on the fight against corruption JOIN(2023) 12 final.

**Map 15: People agreeing that there is corruption in the city's local public administration**



#### Local public administration in the city: corruption

There is corruption in the local public administration in the city: totally agree (%)

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2019.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). No data available for Tirana.

In 2023, and similarly to what was observed in 2019, corruption is more often perceived as an issue by people residing in capital cities (58 %) than people residing in non-capital cities (49 %). Within most countries<sup>(52)</sup>, capital cities perform the worst in terms of perceived corruption.

In solely three out of ten cities<sup>(53)</sup>, perceived corruption in local administration is higher than in the national government. This is in line with patterns often observed across European countries in terms of trust in institutions<sup>(54)</sup>.

Across all cities, the highest perception of corruption is in Belgrade (RS) and Zagreb (HR), where almost nine out of ten residents agree that there is corruption in their city's local public

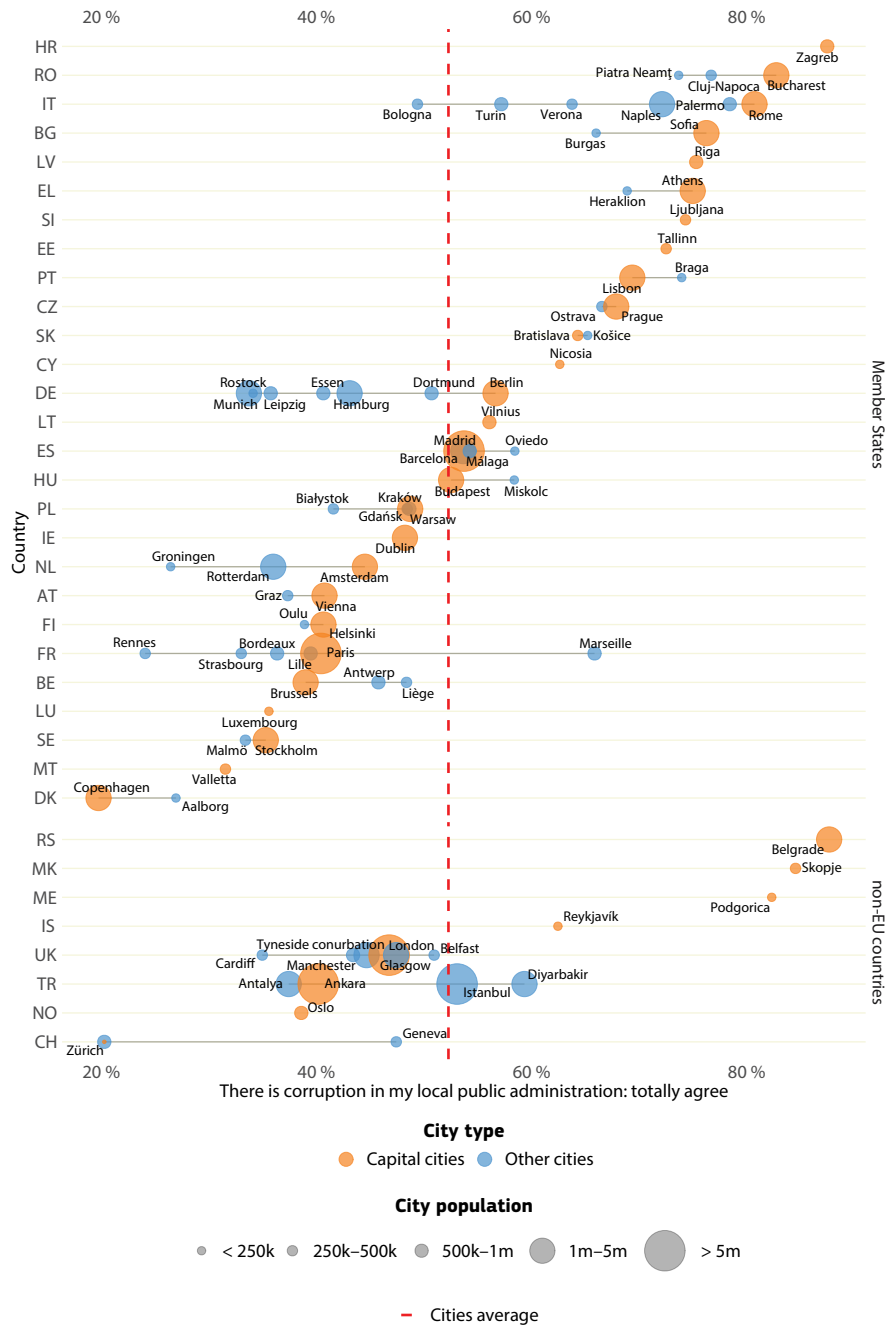
administration, closely followed by Skopje (MK), Bucharest (RO), Rome (IT) and Podgorica (ME), with around eight out of ten residents agreeing. At the other end of the spectrum, with two out of ten residents agreeing that there is corruption in the local public administration, Zürich (CH) and Copenhagen (DK) are the cities with the lowest levels of perceived corruption, closely followed by Rennes (FR), Groningen (NL) and Aalborg (DK) (Table 30).

<sup>52</sup> The exceptions being Portugal, Slovakia, Hungary, Spain, Belgium, France, Denmark, Türkiye and the United Kingdom.

<sup>53</sup> Source: Gallup World Poll 2022; question: 'Is corruption widespread throughout the government in this country, or not?'

<sup>54</sup> Source: Standard Eurobarometer 99 (2023), where regional or local authorities enjoy the trust of the majority of residents (55 %), while trust in national government stands at 32 %.

Figure 50: People agreeing that there is corruption in the city's local public administration, by city



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*.  
 Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). No data available for Tirana.

**Table 30:** People agreeing that there is corruption in the city's local public administration, top and bottom 10 scores

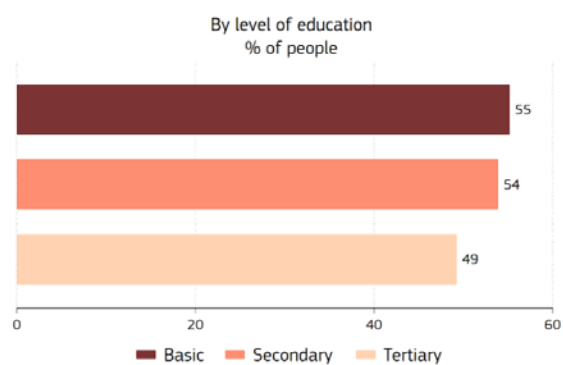
Top 10 (lowest score first)		Bottom 10 (highest score first)	
City	Score	City	Score
Copenhagen (DK)	20%	Belgrade (RS)	88%
Zurich (CH)	20%	Zagreb (HR)	87%
Rennes (FR)	24%	Skopje (MK)	84%
Groningen (NL)	26%	Bucharest (RO)	83%
Aalborg (DK)	27%	Podgorica (ME)	82%
Valletta (MT)	31%	Rome (IT)	81%
Strasbourg (FR)	33%	Palermo (IT)	78%
Malmö (SE)	33%	Cluj-Napoca (RO)	77%
Munich (DE)	34%	Sofia (BG)	76%
Rostok (DE)	34%	Rīga (LV)	75%

Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023.

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered); numbers are rounded to the unit. No data available for Tirana.

A few studies have shown how individuals with different levels of education perceive corruption differently. Individuals with higher levels of education are, for instance, more incline to identify politicians as being corrupt or unfit for office or to complain about misconduct and bad governance (Eicher et al., 2009; Dutta and Sanjukta, 2013; Botero et al., 2013). Results

from the survey are somehow different and show that, at 55 %, respondents with lower levels of formal education tend to perceive less corruption in their local public administration than higher educated people (at 54 % for secondary and 55 % for tertiary).

**Figure 51:** People agreeing that there is corruption in the city's local public administration, by level of education

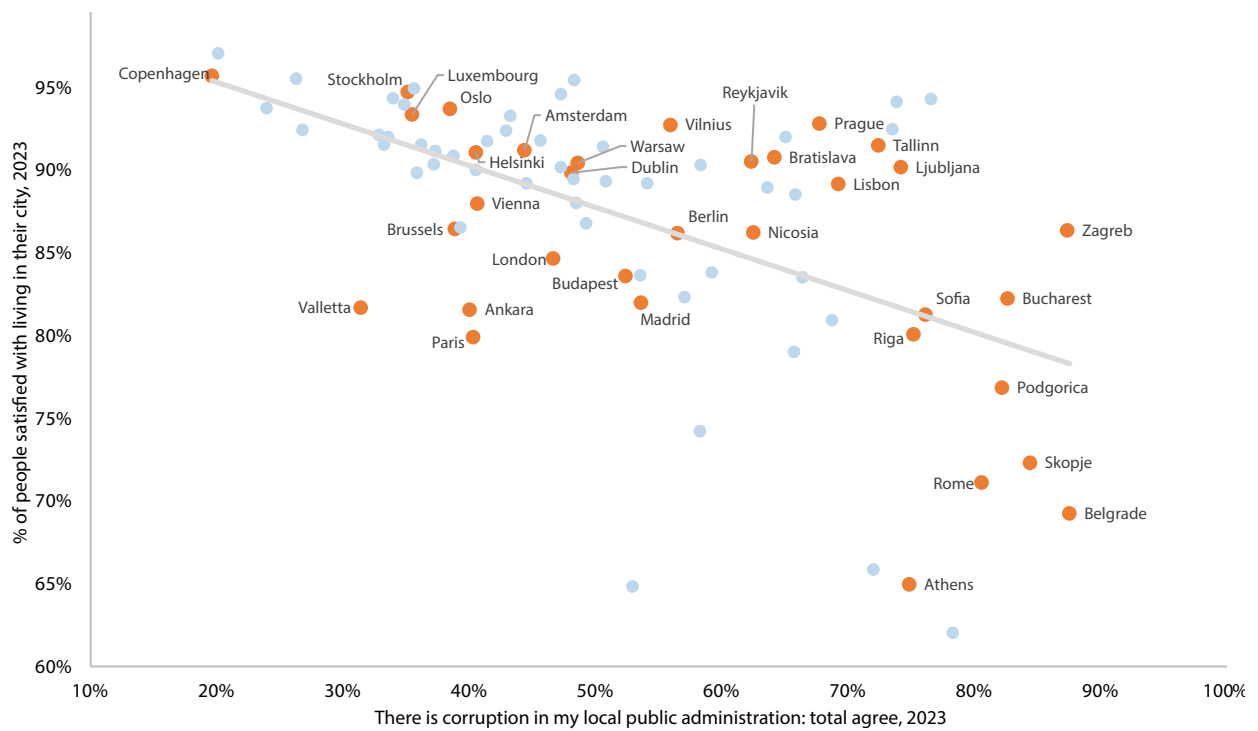
Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities*, 2023

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered).

Why is corruption of paramount importance for measuring satisfaction with life and with quality of life in cities? Existing studies clearly point to the fact that a higher perception of corruption is associated with lower life satisfaction (Helliwell, 2003; Tay et al., 2014; Ciziceno and Travaglino, 2019). Across the cities in the survey, a clear negative correlation<sup>55</sup> can be observed between the perceived level of corruption in a city's local public administration and the percentage of people satisfied with living in the city (Figure 52).

<sup>55</sup> The perception of corruption in the local public administration explains 30 % of the variation in the satisfaction of living in the city, i.e. an R-square of 0.3.

**Figure 52: People satisfied with living in their city versus perceived corruption in the local public administration**



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). No data available for Tirana.

Between 2019 and 2023, in 52 of the 76 cities for which a comparison can be made, the share of those answering that there is corruption in their local public administration has increased. In around 25 % of the cities, the increase is higher than 5 pp.



**Figure 53:** People agreeing that there is corruption in the city's local public administration, comparison between 2019 and 2023



Source: DG Regional and Urban Policy, *Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities, 2023*

Note: Percentages are based on all respondents (excluding 'don't know' / not answered). The dashed line is a 45-degree line (no change between 2019 and 2023). No data for 2023 for Tirana. The chart only includes cities for which a time comparison can be made (see page 9).

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