

# Urban Neighborhood: An Environmental Profile



## Topic

An environmental quality assessment of urban neighborhoods

## Introduction

Urban landscapes can vary a great deal. Towns and cities offer both the best and some of the worst conditions for people to live in. It is possible to distinguish between different types of neighborhoods. Physical neighborhoods have houses of the same age and style. Social neighborhoods contain residents from a similar social, economic, or ethnic group. Functional neighborhoods revolve around shops, schools, churches, and other facilities that act as a focus for the area. Community neighborhoods result from a “sense of togetherness” as movement into and out of such areas is limited. There are many aspects of our urban surroundings that can be studied through first-hand investigations. You will test the hypothesis that environmental quality will vary between different neighborhoods in your town or city.

## Time required

2 hours (1/2 hour per neighborhood)

## Materials

Environmental Quality Assessment Sheet (1 per neighborhood)  
(see diagram 1 overleaf)  
clipboard and pencil  
local street maps

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## Safety note



**Be aware of traffic. Work in groups of a minimum of four.**

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## Procedure

### *Part A: Planning*

1. Discuss the types of neighborhoods that exist in your local area. Are there many differences among neighborhoods?
2. Use the maps to choose four local neighborhoods in which to collect data for your investigation.

### *Part B: Collecting data*

1. Working in groups of four, visit each of the neighborhoods in turn.
2. First, take a good walk around each area to build up a general impression.

3. Complete your Environmental Quality Assessment Sheet (see diagram 1 below). For each pair of words or statements, check the box that best describes the neighborhood. For example, if the area has very well-designed housing, you might give it a score of +2 while an area of very badly designed housing might get a score of -2. Try to be consistent.
4. Calculate the total score for each neighborhood.

1

**ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT SHEET**

Streetworker \_\_\_\_\_ Group \_\_\_\_\_  
 Neighborhood \_\_\_\_\_ Date / time \_\_\_\_\_  
 Conditions \_\_\_\_\_

		HIGH QUALITY	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	LOW QUALITY
<b>H O U S I N G</b>	Well designed							Badly designed
	Good external condition							Poor external condition
	Expensive							Cheap
<b>T R A F F I C</b>	Uncongested streets							Congested streets
	Easy to park							Difficult to park
	Quiet							Noisy
	Safe for people							Dangerous for people
	Little pollution							Heavy pollution
<b>G R E E N S P A C E</b>	Large yards							Small yards
	Plenty of trees and shrubs							Few trees and shrubs
	Plenty of public parks and gardens							Few public parks and gardens
<b>G E N E R A L</b>	Attractive							Ugly
	Little vandalism							Much vandalism
	Tidy							Untidy
	Good reputation							Poor reputation

TOTAL SCORE =

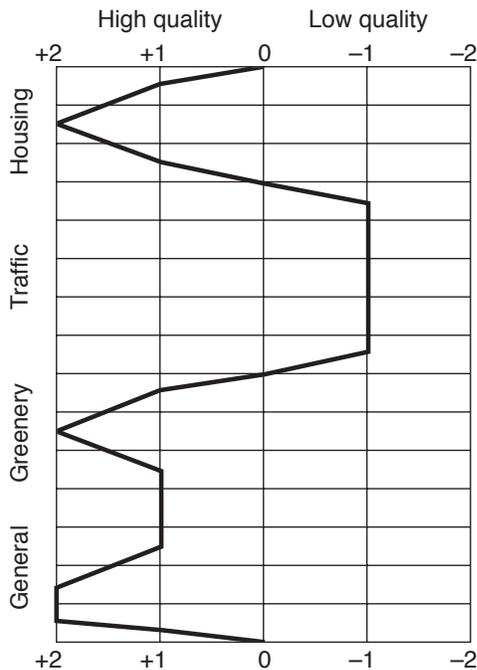
**NOTE:** to calculate the total score, add up all the + scores, next add up all the - scores, then find the difference between the two numbers. Remember to include a + or - sign in the total score.  
 Maximum possible score = +30  
 Minimum possible score = -30

*Environmental Quality Assessment Sheet (one per neighborhood)*

## Analysis

1. Draw bar charts to show the total scores for the four neighborhoods.
2. For each neighborhood, construct a diagram like the one in diagram 2 below.

2



### *Assessing environmental quality*

3. Discuss what the bar charts and diagrams show about the neighborhoods you have surveyed. In diagram 2 above, for example, this imaginary neighborhood is generally of high quality although it seems to have traffic problems.
4. What conclusions can you draw about each neighborhood? Do your findings support the hypothesis?
5. Look at the factors that you have marked as negative on the profiles. How could they be improved? Would it be expensive to improve them?
6. Choose two of your neighborhoods for further investigation. Try to select two contrasting neighborhoods. Use a street map to do a road-by-road survey to locate all the local facilities, e.g., schools and shops. Design a short questionnaire to find out whether people are happy with the facilities in their neighborhood. Interview at least 20 people in each area.

## Want to know more?