Lesson 1 What is Liveability?

Do you like where you live? This seems such a simple question but answering it may not be quite so simple. Most people like some things about the place where they live but would like to improve some other things. For example, one person might like their neighbourhood because it has a great primary school and a park with tennis courts, but they wish that there were more shops close by. Their neighbour, on the other hand, likes the quietness of the neighbourhood because there are no nearby shops but there is a bus that takes her to a large shopping centre in the next suburb.

Geographers are interested in these issues and use the term 'liveability' to describe what a place is like to live in. When we think about how liveable a place is, it can lead to some big questions, such as these:

- Why are some places better to live in than other places?
- Why do some places have increasing populations while other places have decreasing populations?
- Why do people in some places have great hospitals, parks and shops while people in other places do not?
- Why do some people have a stronger connection to the place in which they live than other people who live in the same place?

Studies have shown that people's connection to the place in which they live and the liveability of that place is affected by a number of factors. The following diagram shows some of these key factors.
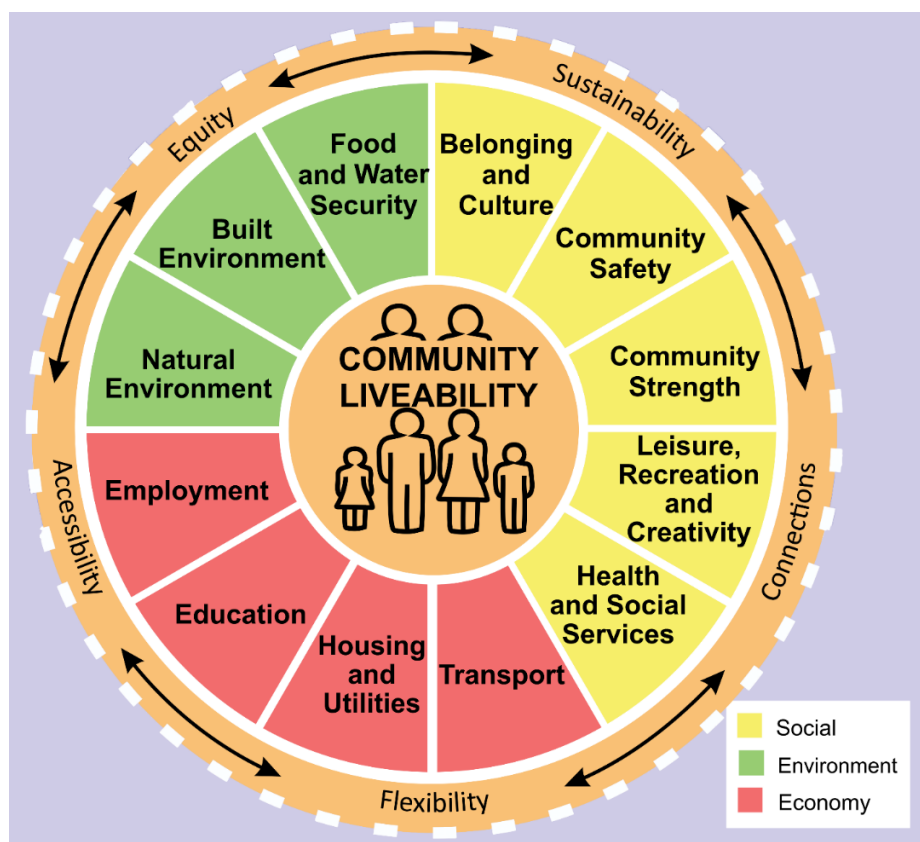

Figure 1. Key social, environmental and economic factors that impact liveability. Source: Wimmera CMA https://wimmera.rcs.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2021/07/DRAFT-Feb-2021-Liveability-Framework-1536x961.png

Task 1

The following image shows Black Rock, a suburb of Melbourne. Melbourne is often considered one of the world's most liveable cities.

Figure 2. The suburb of Black Rock, Melbourne. The Melbourne Central Business District can be seen on the horizon about 20 kilometres away. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aerial_perspective_of_the_Rock_suburb_relative_to_Port_Philip_Bay_and_the_Melbourne_CBD_January_2019.jpg

1. Using the diagram in Figure 1 as a guide, list some of the factors that may help to make Black Rock in Figure 2 a liveable community. For example: The closeness of the beach means that residents of Black Rock can enjoy the natural environment.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What are some features of Black Rock that may make it less liveable?

_____

_____

_____

_____

The following photograph shows a rural scene in the Wimmera in the north-west of Victoria.

Figure 3: Rural scene at Joel South. This landscape includes a farmhouse, sheds, and sheep in a paddock.

3. What things might attract some people to live in this rural place?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Do you consider this to be a less liveable place or more liveable than Black Rock? Give some reasons for your answer.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Can we measure liveability?

Liveability can be a tricky concept to measure as it differs from person to person. Geographers often use a set of criteria to measure liveability as this allows them to compare different places different people's liveability preferences, or how the liveability of a place changes over time.

The Year 7 students of Black Rock High School studied the liveability of their neighbourhood. As part of their fieldwork, they asked residents to complete a short neighbourhood liveability survey. The survey of one of the residents is shown below. (Source of survey: http://www.geogspace.net.au/files/Core/Exemplars/Yr7/17.5.1%20Neighbourhood%20liveability%20survey.pdf

Liveability survey: Black Rock

Criteria	Liveability Score				
	Poor/low				Good/high
Environmental factors					
• Climate: Humidity/temperature	1	2	③	4	5
• Quality of urban design	1	2	3	④	5
• Architecture	1	2	3	④	5
• Streetscapes	1	2	③	4	5
• Parks and gardens	1	2	3	④	5
• Maintenance of public spaces	1	2	③	4	5
Social factors					
Law and order					
• Level of violent crime	1	2	③	4	5
• Level of petty crime	1	②	3	4	5
• Alcohol-related disorder	1	②	3	4	5
• Graffiti and vandalism	1	②	3	4	5
• Personal safety	1	2	③	4	5
Education					
• Choice of schools	1	2	3	④	5
• Quality public schools	1	2	3	④	5
• Opportunities for post-school education	1	2	3	④	5
Healthcare					
• Access to local dentists and doctors	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Availability of private health care	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Quality of public health care	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Aged care facilities	1	2	3	④	5
Cultural factors					
• Places of worship	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Community recreational facilities	1	2	3	④	5
• Entertainment venues	1	2	3	④	5
• Public libraries	1	2	3	④	5
• Restaurants	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Licensed clubs	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Ethnic diversity	1	2	3	④	5

Wimmera CMA

gtav

Economic factors

• Employment opportunities	1	2	3	(4)	5
• Affordable housing	(1)	2	3	4	5
• Access to shops and department stores	1	2	3	(4)	5
• Service stations and mechanics	1	2	3	(4)	5
• Hardware outlets	1	2	3	(4)	5
• Personal services such as hairdressers	1	2	3	4	(5)

Infrastructure factors

• Quality of road access	1	2	(3)	4	5
• Availability of public transport	1	2	3	(4)	5
• Transport interchanges and commuter parking	1	(2)	3	4	5
• Quality of telecommunications	1	2	3	4	(5)
• Infrastructure	1	2	3	(4)	5
• Reliability of utilities – water, electricity, sewage	1	2	3	4	(5)
• Cycle ways	1	2	3	4	(5)
• Maintenance of public schools and hospitals	1	2	(3)	4	5

Year 7 students at Wimmera High School completed a similar survey as part of their fieldwork investigation into liveability in their local area. Here is a copy of one the surveys completed by a local resident:

Liveability survey: Wimmera community

Criteria	Liveability Score				
	Poor/low			Good/high	
Environmental factors					
• Climate: Humidity/temperature	1	2	③	4	5
• Quality of urban design	1	2	③	4	5
• Architecture	1	2	③	4	5
• Streetscapes	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Parks and gardens	1	2	3	④	⑤
• Maintenance of public spaces	1	2	3	4	⑤
Social factors					
Law and order					
• Level of violent crime	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Level of petty crime	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Alcohol-related disorder	1	2	3	④	5
• Graffiti and vandalism	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Personal safety	1	2	3	4	⑤
Education					
• Choice of schools	1	2	③	4	5
• Quality public schools	1	2	③	4	5
• Opportunities for post-school education	1	②	3	4	5
Healthcare					
• Access to local dentists and doctors	1	2	③	4	5
• Availability of private health care	1	2	③	4	5
• Quality of public health care	1	2	3	④	5
• Aged care facilities	1	2	③	4	5
Cultural factors					
• Places of worship	1	2	③	4	5
• Community recreational facilities	1	2	3	④	5
• Entertainment venues	1	2	③	4	5
• Public libraries	1	2	3	④	5
• Restaurants	1	2	③	4	5
• Licensed clubs	1	2	③	4	5
• Ethnic diversity	1	2	③	4	5
Economic factors					
• Employment opportunities	1	2	③	4	5
• Affordable housing	1	2	3	4	⑤

Wimmera CMA

gtav

• Access to shops and department stores	1	2	③	4	5
• Service stations and mechanics	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Hardware outlets	1	2	③	4	5
• Personal services such as hairdressers	1	2	3	④	5

Infrastructure factors

• Quality of road access	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Availability of public transport	1	2	③	4	5
• Transport interchanges and commuter parking	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Quality of telecommunications	1	2	3	4	⑤
• Infrastructure	1	2	3	④	5
• Reliability of utilities – water, electricity, sewage	1	2	3	④	5
• Cycle ways	1	②	3	4	5
• Maintenance of public schools and hospitals	1	2	3	④	5

Task 2

1. Calculate the total liveability scores for each of these two places. Add all of the scores out of five to give you a grand total out of 195.

    Black Rock Liveability Score: _____/195   Wimmera Liveability Score:_____/195

2. Which of the two communities was rated as being the most liveable?

    _____

    _____

    _____

3. In which community were educational opportunities the best? Explain why this might be.

    _____

    _____

    _____

4. In which community was housing affordability considered a major problem? Explain why this might be.

    _____

    _____

    _____

Wimmera CMA

gtav

5. Download a liveability survey from http://www.geogspace.net.au/files/Core/Exemplars/Yr7/17.5.1%20Neighbourhood%20liveability%20survey.pdf and complete it for the community in which you live.

6. What did you learn about liveability surveys from completing this activity?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____