Rural Youth Project

2018 SURVEY REPORT

CONTENTS

PARTNERS

Initiated and managed by

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FOREWORD

Outward migration of young people is a challenge for rural areas all over the world, and is pertinent in Scotland which has a significant rural landscape. At Jane Craigie Marketing (JCM) we have been involved in various leadership programmes from Scottish Enterprise Rural Leadership to Windsor Leadership, and we are driven by a passion and committment to develop leadership and a sense of 'can-do' amongst young people in rural places, in order to support them to enact change in their own communities.

Our belief is that if young people make vibrant lives in rural places, they become the life blood of that area, and this will promote rural economies and communities to thrive. The aim of the survey is to share the outcomes with the wider industry to help ensure that, collectively, we are informed and equipped to better support and inspire future generations.

We have been overwhelmed by the response to the project from the industry and those with a vested interest in rural politics and look forward to building on the work of this first phase to create some valuable data and networks to promote positive momentum and change, particularly in Scotland.

Jane Craigie
MD of Jane Craigie Marketing

The JCM team - Susannah, Becca, Rebecca and Jane

1. SURVEY PURPOSE & PROCESS

The Rural Youth Project

The Rural Youth Project was initiated by agricultural and rural communication specialists Jane Craigie Marketing (JCM) in early 2018 to find out more about young people living rurally and their challenges, aspirations and needs, in order to support the future of participating countries' rural youth.

Driven by a passion for rural matters, the goal is twofold. Young people are the life-blood and future of rural communities and yet research into this group is either limited or outdated, so the first aim is to collate information that can be shared with the wider industry and policy-makers so they are better informed to engage with rural young people and to provide effective strategic support for their future. Secondly, it is to identify young people with leadership potential and equip them with the confidence and tools to assume leadership and instigate positive change in their rural communities.

The Rural Youth Project, which has been supported by a number of industry partners from the UK and Europe, has a three-prong approach. At its core is the online research survey, which ran from January-June 2018 and received responses from 755 young people aged 18-28, living or working rurally, with specific focus on Scotland, England, Wales, Australia, Canada, Sweden and the USA. The aim was to find out more about the opinions and attitudes of this group to housing, transport, connectivity, employment and opportunities, and their degree of optimism with a view to better understanding how they can be supported by the wider industry and policy-makers.

Alongside the survey, the Rural Youth Project has curated a series of vloggers sharing their experiences of living and working rurally, both from the UK and across the world. This develops some of the themes, opportunities and challenges highlighted in the survey including, though not exclusively, employment, training and access to services.

The final element is the Rural Youth Ideas Festival. Held on a farm in Central Scotland and funded by Rural Perth and Kinross LEADER, it combines a line-up of inspiring speakers with leadership, business and communication skills workshops, against a backdrop of glamping, live music and local food. The aim of the festival is to inspire the 100 young people gathered to enact and lead change in their own rural place.

Findings from all three aspects of the project will be collated and shared with the wider industry. The Rural Youth Project will run initially until 2022, with an annual survey to develop the research. The findings to date will be used to launch three pilot projects in 2019 to nurture enterprising people from rural backgrounds and their ideas; to develop lasting links, between urban and rural places; and to facilitate international exchanges with young people in other nations.

Methodology

The survey was conducted between January and June 2018 and targeted young people aged 18-28 living or working in rural areas, both in the UK and across the world. The survey was web-based, and the survey link was available through the Rural Youth Project website and project partners' websites.

Responses were generated by sharing the story and the link through social media channels, partners' communications and features in printed and online trade press articles. 755 responses were received, including 570 from the UK, and the remaining 185 from prinicipally Australia, Canada, Sweden and the United States of America. As respondents were self-selecting, there was no intention or expectation of securing a representative sample of young people across rural Scotland. However with 570 responses from the UK, the survey does provide the most comprehensive recent assessment of the opinions of young people living in rural Britain.

The survey was designed to provide an insight into the attitudes and opinions of young people living in rural places. The topics covered in the survey are:

- The reasons for living in a rural area
- Skills and work life
- Connectivity
- Community and social life
- Degree of optimism

Key Findings

- **Over 80% of young people live in rural areas because of their emotional and family ties, for example they live with their partner or are involved in the family business. In our view, this makes the relationship with the place that they live or work more complex, because they may feel that they are tied to where they live and have to make do with their situation. This assumption is supported through some of the comments from respondents.**
- **The inter-related issues of limited job opportunities, poor transport links and insufficient or expensive housing make living in rural places challenging for young people. Added to these practical challenges, only 13% of young people feel that they have a say in the future of their own communities and over 60% felt that they needed more access to activities to meet other young people in their areas.**
- **94% of young people believe digital connectivity is essential for their future in rural places, yet currently slow speeds and poor mobile phone coverage deleteriously impact their lives. These limitations create practical implications, such as a route to market for micro-businesses or access to online training; as well as social implications linked to social isolation.**
- **Despite the challenging circumstances that many respondents cited, the groundswell of opinion (71%) is that they felt optimistic about the future and only 26% planned to move to a town of city. This finding is fundamentally important to the next steps for the Rural Youth Project and for wider stakeholders in the future of rural youths.**

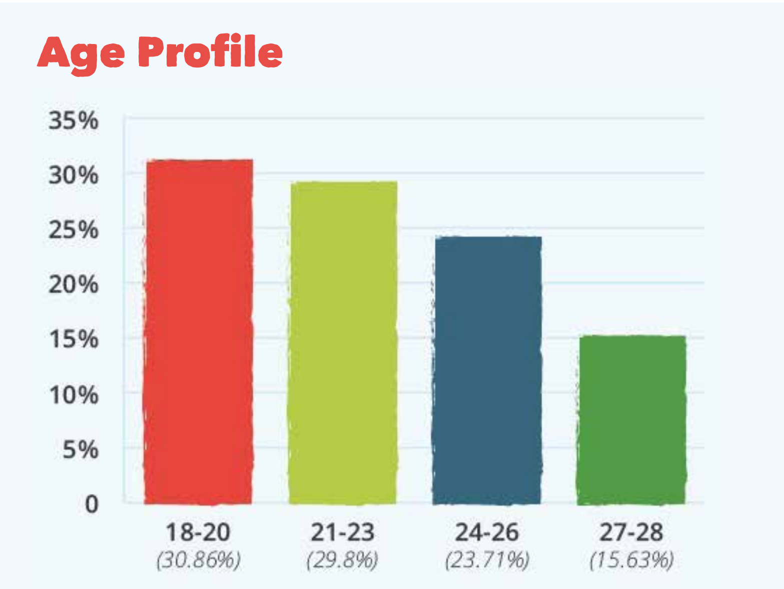
The JCM team behind this project firmly believes that if the right support is given to empower young people to envision and enact change themselves, then the power of youth to keep rural places vibrant and alive is the key to their own future, as well as to that of the country's rural economy. Central to this is older and younger generations working together, alongside strategic support from industry influencers.

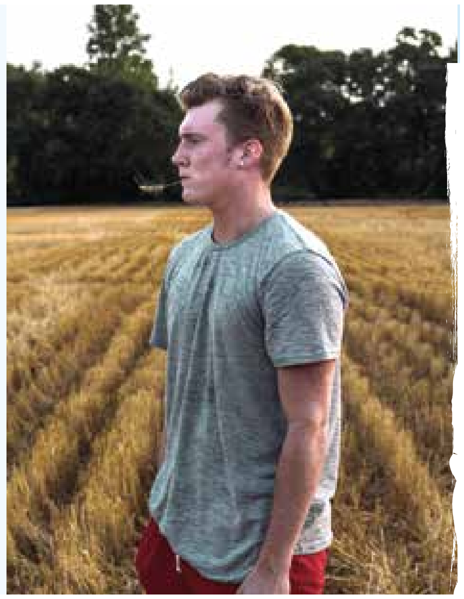
The survey was self-selecting so there was no control over the occupation, sex or age (other than in the 18-28-year-old bracket) of the respondents. The spread of ages was fairly even within the age range but the survey was heavily dominated by female respondents and those from farming backgrounds. This is the first time the survey has been run and various learnings will be incorporated into future research.

2. RESPONDENT PROFILE

A total of 755 responses to the survey were received.

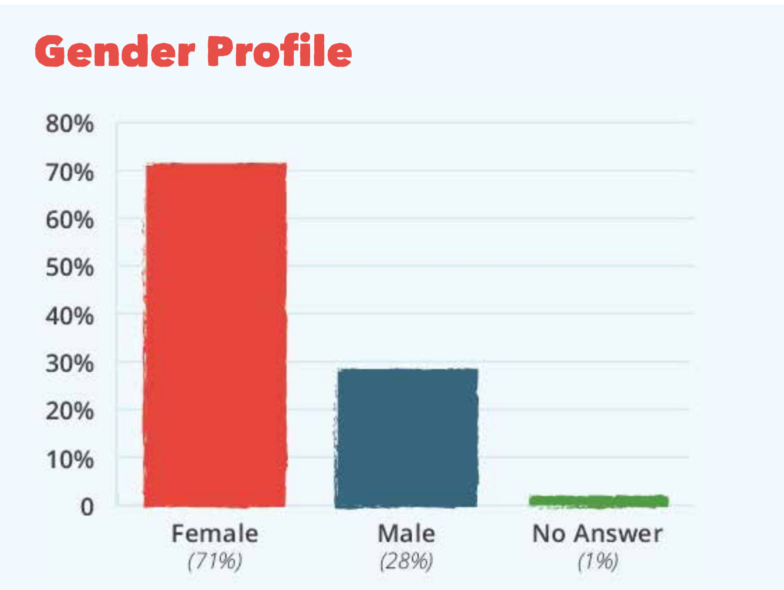
Figure 2.1





There was a good spread of responses across the age cohorts in the survey. There was a significant over-representation of female respondents (70%) to the survey which may influence the outcomes of the survey.

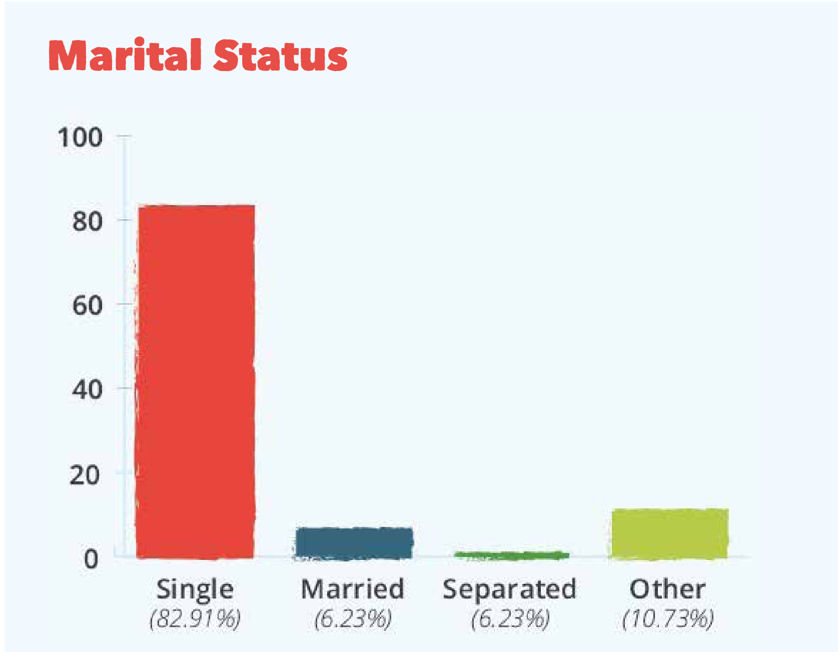
Figure 2.2



Respondents were also asked about their marital status and the responses, presented in Figure 2.3, demonstrate that a significant proportion (over 80%) identified as single.

Photos by Autri Taheri / Bryan Papazov on Unsplash

Figure 2.3



We asked those surveyed if they had grown up in the area where they currently live and received the responses illustrated in Figure 2.4. Two-thirds of our respondents had grown up in the area where they currently live with the balancing third moving into the area where they now live.

It is important to interpret this finding in the context of our survey of current rural residents and to factor in the reality that many young people brought up in these rural areas will now be living, studying or working in an urban area (and therefore not captured in the survey research).

Figure 2.4

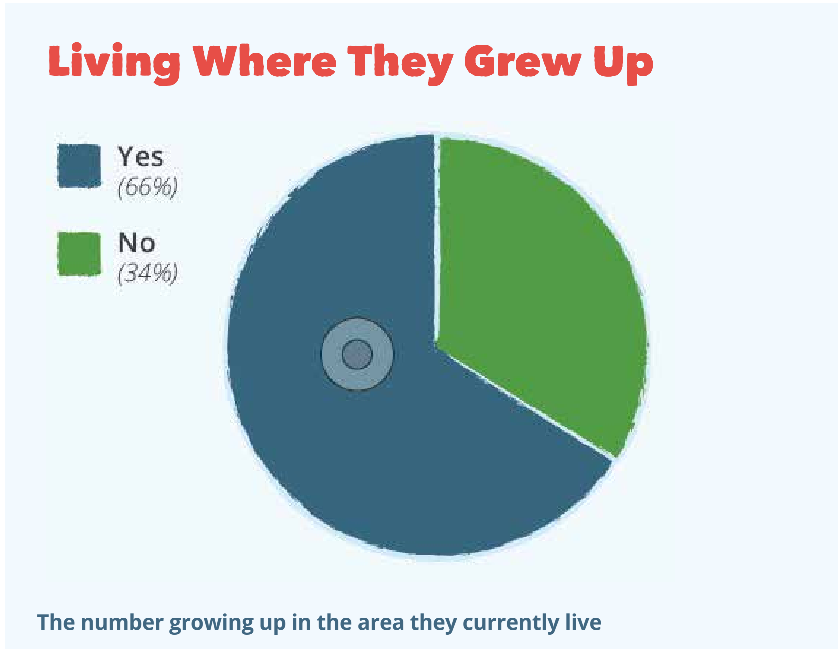


Photo by Rowan S / Gun Kurtaran on Unsplash

Respondent by Country of Residence

The remaining key demographic of the respondents, their residential location, was investigated by nation and, within the UK by postcode.

Table 2.1 details the number of responses received by country in descending order. Respondents were drawn from a total of 24 nations with over three-quarters identifying as residents of the United Kingdom.

Table 2.1

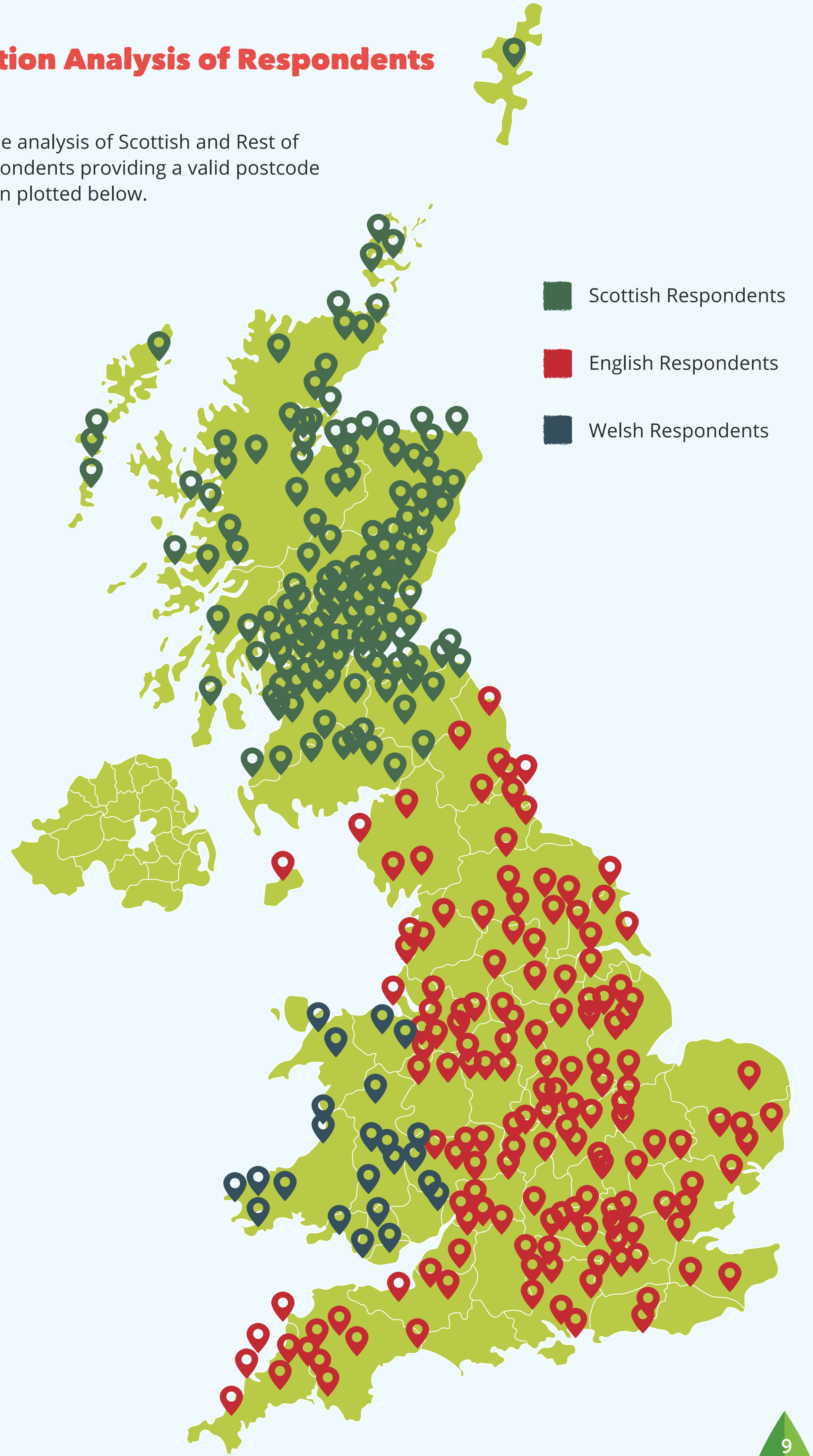
Country	%	No.
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	76.4%	570
Australia	6.7%	50
Sweden	5.5%	41
United States of America	4.2%	31
Canada	2.8%	21
Austria	0.7%	5
Finland	0.7%	5
Chile	0.3%	2
France	0.3%	2
Iceland	0.3%	2
Italy	0.3%	2
Latvia	0.3%	2
Norway	0.3%	2
Afghanistan	0.1%	1
Angola	0.1%	1
Central African Republic	0.1%	1
Croatia	0.1%	1
Germany	0.1%	1
Greece	0.1%	1
Nigeria	0.1%	1
Spain	0.1%	1
Sri Lanka	0.1%	1
Turkey	0.1%	1
United Republic of Tanzania	0.1%	1
Totals	**100.0%**	**746***

*9 did not give country of residence

Location Analysis of Respondents

Postcode analysis of Scottish and Rest of UK respondents providing a valid postcode has been plotted below.

Figure 2.5



3. WHY I LIVE IN A RURAL AREA

We asked people their reasons for currently living in a rural area – first asking them to select from a menu their main reason for living where they do. The responses received are listed (in descending order of selection) in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Answer	%	No.
My family/partner/spouse lives here	56.9%	404
My work/job	24.4%	173
Education/Training/Apprenticeship	11.0%	78
It's beautiful	5.5%	39
Leisure related (i.e. play for a local team, own a horse etc.)	1.3%	9
It's cheap	1.0%	7

The majority identified a relationship as the main reason for living in their area, followed by a quarter who identified their work as the primary reason. Together work, education and training were identified by a third of respondents as their main reason for living where they did.

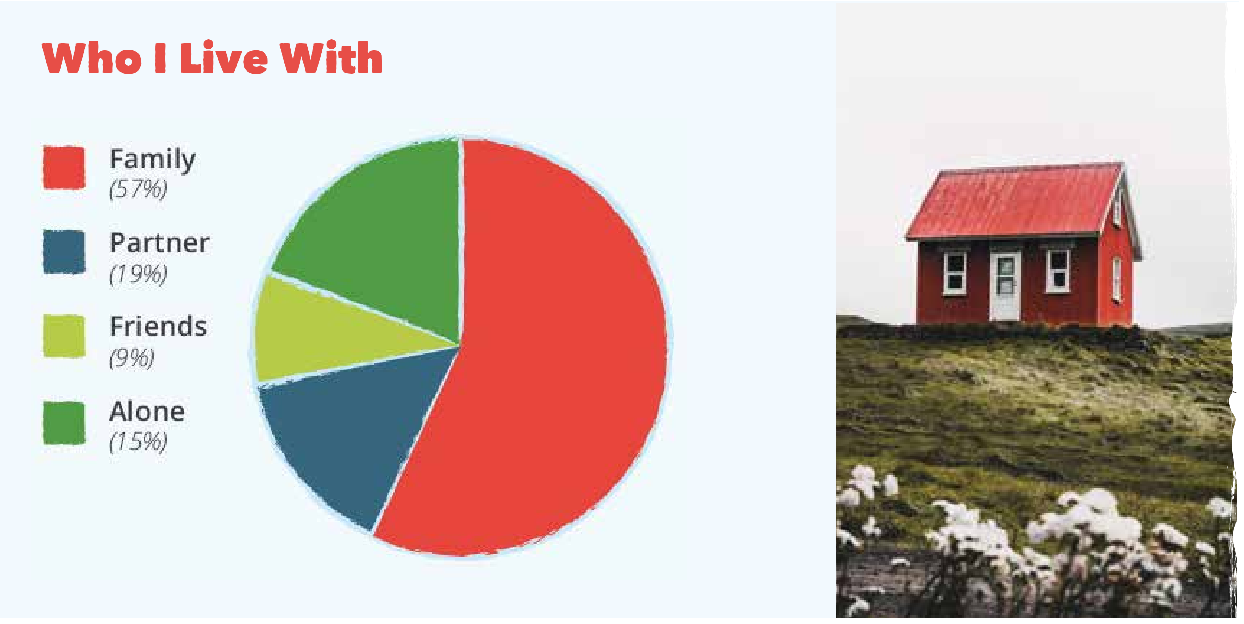
A further 31 respondents selected an "other" reason for living where they did. Several stated that they could not identify a "main" reason for living where they did and suggested that it was for a combination of some or all of the reasons presented as options. Several also stated that they lived where the family farm was – perhaps a reflection of the unique status of the farm as a family home and a family business.

To further tease out the respondents' opinions on the area where they lived, we asked them to describe their area in three words. We have produced in Figure 3.1 a word cloud for each of the three words cited by the 500 respondents to this question.

We also asked the respondents if they lived alone or with others, and if so who with. The responses, illustrated in Figure 3.2, record just under 60% living with another family member or members. Of the remainder 19% lived with a partner and just 15% lived alone. These results are perhaps not surprising given the stage of life of the respondents.

Figure 3.1

Figure 3.2



A total of 639 of our respondents identified themselves as coming from a farming family and of these 235 (37%) identified as still living on the family farm. We asked then about the enterprises on their family farm and received the responses detailed (in descending order of popularity) in Table 3.2. Respondents could identify multiple enterprises on the farm.

Main Enterprises On Family Farm

Table 3.2

Answer choice	%	No.
Beef Cattle	49.4%	171
Sheep	46.2%	160
Cereals i.e. wheat, barley, oats	35.0%	121
Arable	24.0%	83
Crops (other) i.e. potatoes, oilseed rape	20.2%	70
Other (please specify)	17.1%	59
Dairy	15.9%	55
Diversified / Tourism i.e farm shop, meat box scheme, cafe	9.0%	31
Eggs	6.9%	24
Forestry	5.2%	18
Horticulture i.e veg, fruit, flowers and nursery stock	4.3%	15
Poultry	4.3%	15
Pigs	3.8%	13
Machinery - repairs	3.2%	11
Feedstuffs	2.9%	10
Seed	2.0%	7
Machinery - sales	0.6%	2

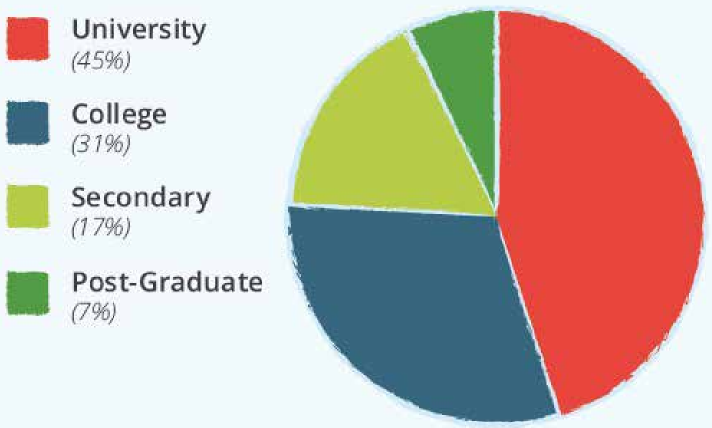
Photo by Luke Stackpoole on Unsplash

4. SKILLS & WORK LIFE

We asked people to tell us about their educational attainment, ongoing skills training, work and any skills they would like to train for. We first asked people about their current level of education. The findings are illustrated in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1

Current highest level of educational attainment



These findings suggest high levels of educational attainment amongst our respondents – with 83% having a further or higher education outcome.

We next asked the respondents if they were currently undertaking any additional skills training. One-third of the 674 who responded advised that they were.

We wanted to understand what types of additional skills training the respondents felt they might benefit from. We received over 380 suggestions which have been broadly classified in Table 4.1. It is clear that, with such an open question, there are variations in the level, intensity and application of training desired by our respondents. Indeed, individual respondents often suggested multiple forms of training ranging from management and leadership to chainsaw training. It is also apparent that many respondents were influenced in their selections by the wording of the question.

Totals do not sum to total number of respondents due to non-specific or non-compliant responses.

Photos by Green Chameleon on Unsplash, Photo by Felix Russell on Unsplash

Skills Training Sought by Respondents

Table 4.1

Skill	No. of first or only mentions	Skill	No. of first or only mentions
Social Media/Comms*	77	Forestry	4
Health & Safety*	41	Management & Leadership	4
Materials Handling*	33	Creative	4
Driving*	32	Event/Tourism Management	3
First Aid	19	Marketing	3
Business Administration	18	Food Hygiene	2
Animal Health Husbandry	14	Spraying	2
Accounting/ Bookkeeping	13	Deer Stalking	1
Agriculture/Agronomy	11	Fencing	1
Healthcare	7	Horticulture	1
HGV Driving	7	Languages	1
IT	6	Media Skills	1
Chainsaw	5	Teaching	1

*examples given in text of question

We next asked the respondents to tell us about their current employment status. The responses are illustrated in Figure 4.2, showing that 70% were employed or self-employed, a quarter were in education or training and 5% were unemployed.

Figure 4.2

Current employment status

Photo by James Baldwin on Unsplash

These figures are broadly in line with national employment data for the period from February to April 2018 where unemployment in the 16-24 age group was recorded at 8.9% in Scotland and 10.8% across the whole of the UK. National unemployment rates are also significantly lower in the 25-34 age group - a banding within which around one third of our respondents will be classified. Similarly, employment rates are largely consistent with national figures for 16-24 year olds which are recorded at 56.3% in Scotland and 54% across the UK for February to April 2018.

As this was an international survey, the respondents were asked to code their occupations using the US Standard Occupational Classification system.Unfortunately this is not compatible with UK classification of employment data. Responses were collected for main, second and third jobs and and are presented in Table 4.2 (overleaf) ranked in descending order of main or only job.

It is apparent that approximately two-thirds of the respondents (64%) had one job, a quarter (24%) had a second job and just over 1 in 10 (12%) had three jobs.

As might be expected of a survey of people living in a rural area, the highest proportion of main or only employment was in the "Farming, Fishing and Forestry Occupations" category, representing over a third (36%) of those able to select a category. The significant proportions of second and third jobs in this category also demonstrate significant levels of part-time employment it supports.

Education, training and associated occupations are the next most significant contributor to employment amongst the respondents (10%), whilst administration and management of businesses and organisations together account for 13% of occupations. Food preparation and serving is also an important contributor to employment with 10% of main jobs and significant proportions of second and third jobs in this sector.

Respondents were asked how they had found their current job from a list of pre-defined responses. The findings are presented in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3

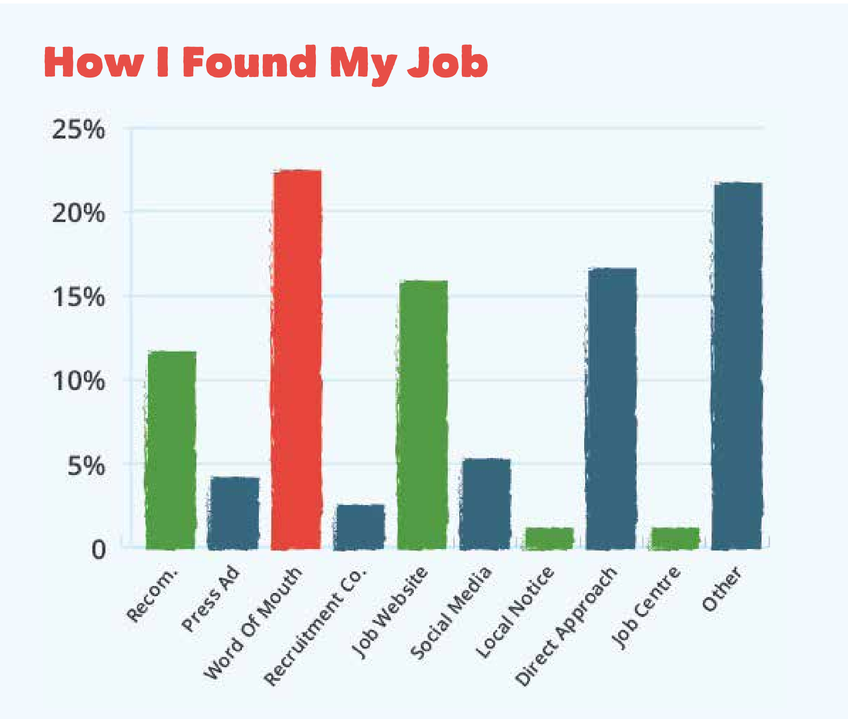


Photo by Erik Lucatero on Unsplash

Occupation Classified By US Bureau Of Labor SOC

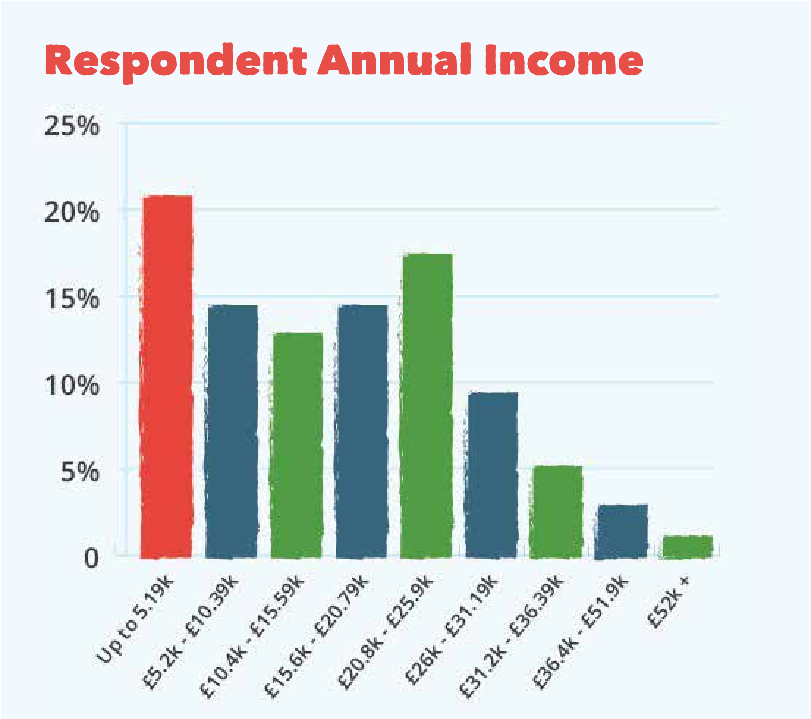
Table 4.2

	Main job		Second job		Third job	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	162	35.6	70	44.9	10	34.5
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	45	9.9	10	6.4	0	0
Management Occupations	29	6.4	2	1.3	0	0
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	29	6.4	6	3.8	2	6.9
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	28	6.2	17	10.9	3	10.3
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	26	5.7	5	3.2	1	3.4
Sales and Related Occupations	26	5.7	7	4.5	4	13.8
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	24	5.3	13	8.3	2	6.9
Community and Social Service Occupations	20	4.4	7	4.5	3	10.3
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	14	3.1	3	1.9	1	3.4
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	7	1.5	2	1.3	0	0
Healthcare Support Occupations	7	1.5	2	1.3	0	0
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	6	1.3	2	1.3	1	3.4
Construction and Extraction Occupations	6	1.3	0	0	0	0
Legal Occupations	5	1.1	1	0.6	0	0
Transportation and Materials Moving Occupations	5	1.1	1	0.6	0	0
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	4	0.9	1	0.6	0	0
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	4	0.9	2	1.3	0	0
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	3	0.7	3	1.9	0	0
Production Occupations	3	0.7	0	0	1	3.4
Protective Service Occupations	1	0.2	2	1.3	1	3.4
Personal Care and Service Occupations	1	0.2	0	0	0	0
Totals Classified	455	100	156	100	29	100
Not Classified and "Other"	72	15.8	35	22.4	34	117
Total Responses	527		191		63	

The most frequently cited source of securing employment was through word of mouth, with recommendations and direct approaches by employers also important sources. A large number of respondents (118) identified "other" sources. Of these the largest source was identified as "Family" (50) and a further 11 identified as self-employed. Personal networks were cited by nine respondents as the source of their current job. Others variously identified the internet, websites and social media as the sources of their current job. Interestingly only two respondents had made a direct approach to their current employer asking for a job, whilst four were directly approached by their current employer. Finally, 10 of our respondents stated that they had secured their current job through a university placement or careers service.

Our respondents were asked to identify a band within which their current income fell. The results are illustrated in Figure 4.4. By taking the median of each band (and the lowest value for the final band) we have estimated the average annual income per respondent at c £16,600.

Figure 4.4



A gross annual income of £16,600 is equivalent to £320 per week. For comparison purposes we have sourced UK data for median gross full- time weekly earnings by age group from 2017. The data for the three age groups most relevant to the RYP survey are summarised in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Age	Male (£)	Female (£)
Age	Male (£)	Female (£)
18 to 21	337.0	309.6
22 to 29	477.9	440.8

https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhour-sandearnings/2017provisionaland2016revisedresults

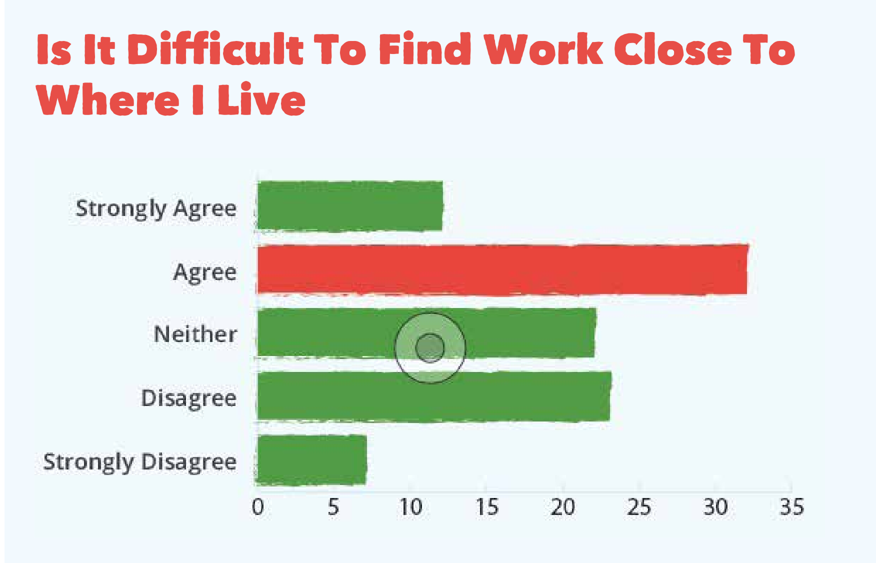
This would tend to suggest that, given the age profile of the respondents, income is within the range that might be expected given the available data at national UK level – which will reflect the generally higher income levels in urban areas.

Photo by Joshua Rawson Harris on Unsplash

Photos by Anthony Ginsbrook / Abigail Keenan on Unsplash

We asked the respondents to give us an indication of how difficult they considered it to be to secure work where they lived. They were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement "It is difficult to find work close to where I live". The results are shown in Figure 4.5.

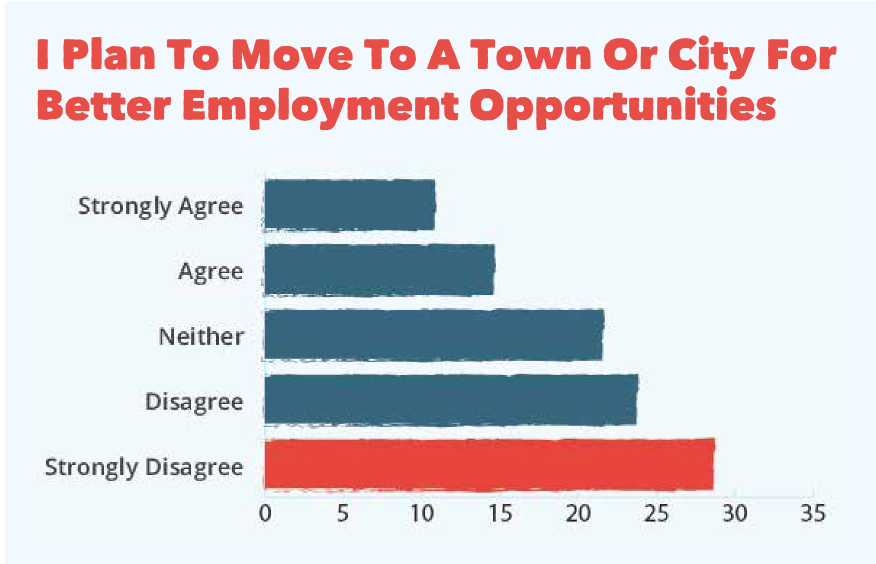
Figure 4.5



It is clear from these responses that more of our respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (45%) than disagreed or strongly disagreed (32%).

Finally, in relation to employment, we asked the respondents about moving away to a town or city where employment opportunities were better. The responses are shown in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6



The responses here show that twice as many respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (52%) than agreed or strongly agreed (26%). This is an encouraging finding in the context of retaining young people in employment in rural areas.

5. CONNECTIVITY

Our respondents were asked about connectivity within and beyond the area where they lived with questions covering both transportation and data connectivity. We first asked about distance travelled to place of work and received the responses detailed in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1

Photos by Rasheed Kemy / Paul Rysz on Unsplash

Taking the median ranges for each of these bands (and using the bottom value of 20 miles for the 20+ mile category) we calculated the weighted average distance travelled at 4.4 miles.

We next asked about how respondents travelled to work and to socialise. The responses received are detailed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Answer Choices	Responses*	
	%	No.
Drive car/van	78%	348
Walk	24%	107
Bus	19%	84
Someone drives me	18%	82
Lift share	17%	76
Train	14%	64
Taxi	14%	62
Work from home	9%	41
Bicycle	8%	36
Motorbike	1%	4

*multiple answers allowed

Unsurprisingly road transport by private car or van (either driving, lift sharing or being driven) was the most frequent mode of transport. Use of public transport (bus and train) was conversely less intensive. We also asked the respondents to describe the public transport service in their area.

Figure 5.2

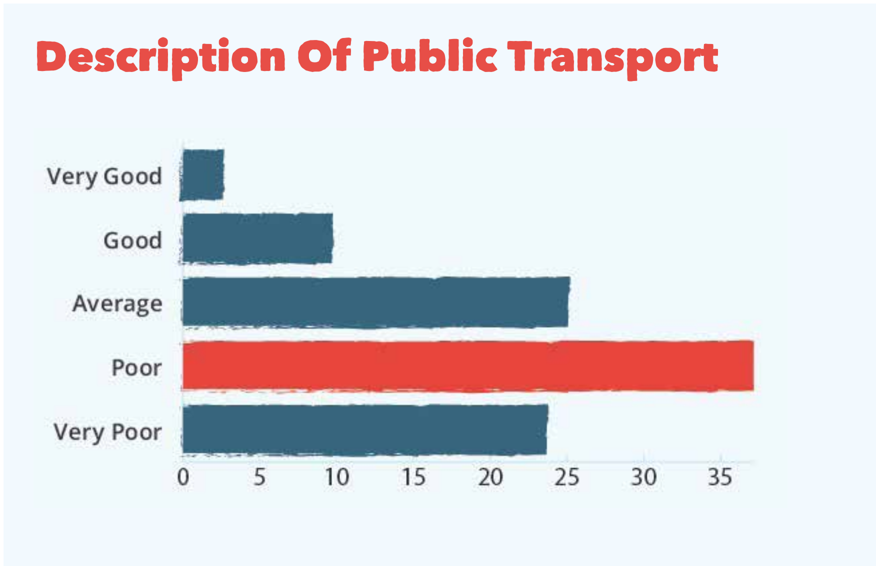


Photo by David Clarke on Unsplash

Significantly more respondents described public transport in their area as “poor “or “very poor” (61%) than described it as “good” or “very good”(13%). This is unsurprising given the issues surrounding the funding of public sector transport infrastructure and service provision in less densely populated areas.

Given the issues with public transport in rural areas we asked the respondents to identify ways in which public transport might be improved in their area. The responses we received are detailed in Table 5.2.

Suggested Improvements To Public Transport

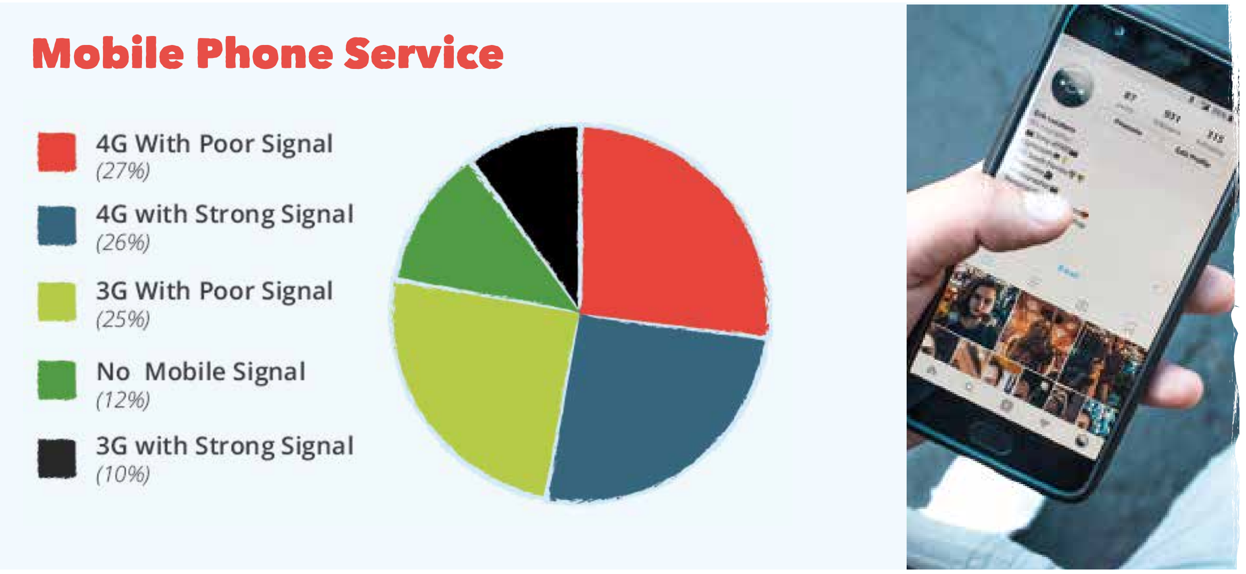
Table 5.2

Answer Choices	Responses*	
	%	No.
More frequent services	69.3%	287
Cheaper transport options	53.1%	220
More transport options (e.g. train, bus)	50.7%	210
Subsidised travel for students/apprentices/trainees	34.1%	141
Subsidised travel for low income workers	23.0%	95
Community bus scheme	21.3%	88
Other (please specify)		40

Multiple responses allowed*

We next asked about mobile communications service, broadband provision and internet usage. The responses on quality and speed of provision are illustrated in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3

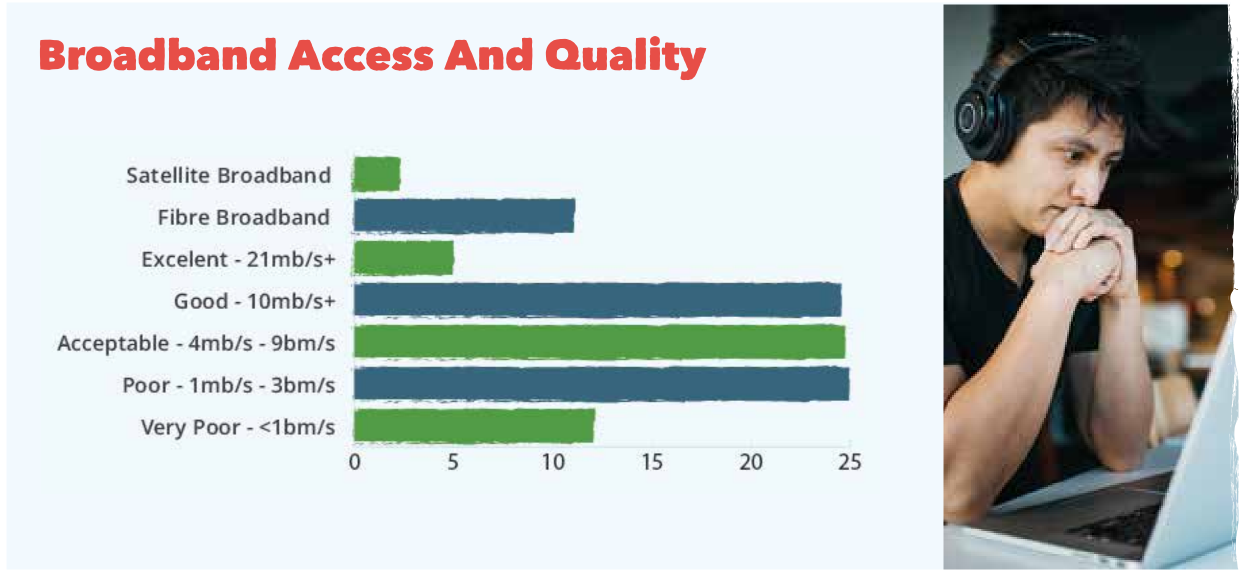


Most notable is the 12% of respondents who reported no mobile signal in their area and the significant proportions who considered their 3G and 4G signal to be poor.

Respondents were asked to provide an assessment of their broadband provision and the responses received are illustrated in Figure 5.4.

Photo by Erik Lucatero on Unsplash

Figure 5.4

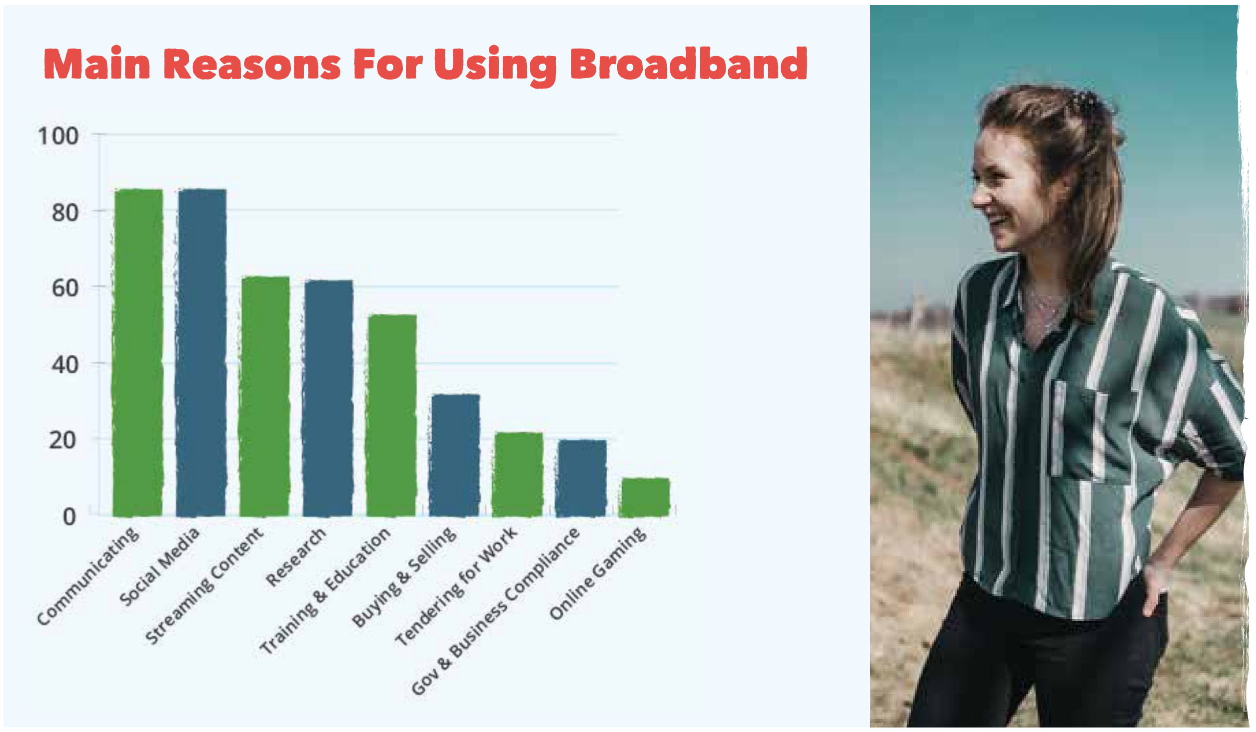


It is apparent, and consistent with expectations, that amongst our respondents, only 13% had access to high speed broadband infrastructure (fibre and satellite).

In relation to the speed of their current connection 36% had speeds of below 4MB per second (suggested as being poor or very poor) although almost half of the respondents (47%) considered their current connection to be acceptable or good. A small minority (5%) had a connection of faster than 21MB per second (classified as excellent).

We asked the respondents to tell us how they used their broadband connection and their responses are shown in Figure 5.5. Most identified multiple uses for their internet access and most striking is the almost universal use for communications (voice and video) and social media (both identified by 85% of respondents). Also of note is the extensive use for streaming of video from third-party information and entertainment platforms (identified by two-thirds of respondents).

Figure 5.5



Photos by Wes Hicks / Nicolas Schebitz on Unsplash

Over half of our respondents used their internet connection to access training and education and over 20% used it specifically to tender for business opportunities.

What is clear from all of these responses is that internet-enabled communications, and access to services and opportunities, is front and centre in the lives of young people living in rural areas. With limitations on physical communications infrastructure and services, the access provided by fast and reliable connection to the internet assumes even greater importance in sustaining rural communities.

This is borne out in the responses to a question about the frequency of internet use, illustrated in Figure 5.6. Over half of the respondents used the internet on an hourly basis and all but two of the balance used it daily. None identified as using the internet less frequently than every other day. When asked about the importance of a broadband connection to their future 94% considered it to be "essential" (Figure 5.7)

Figure 5.6

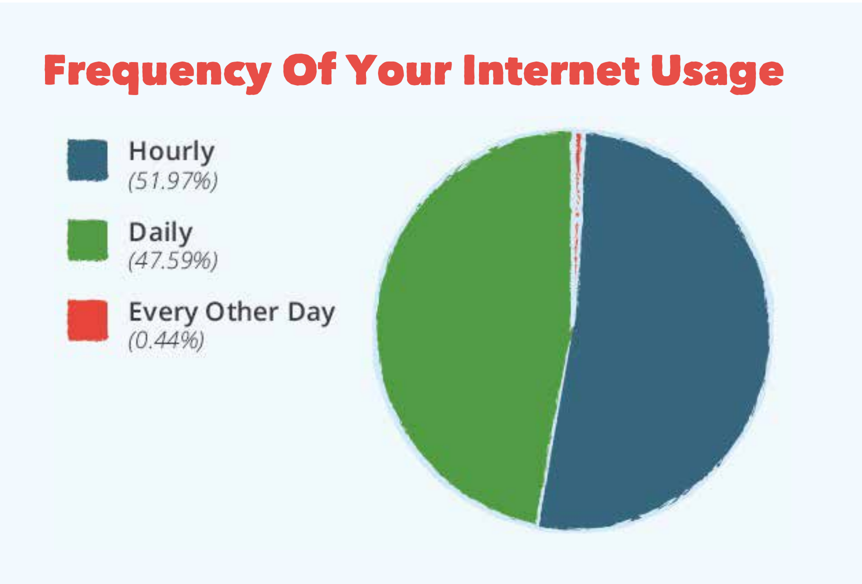
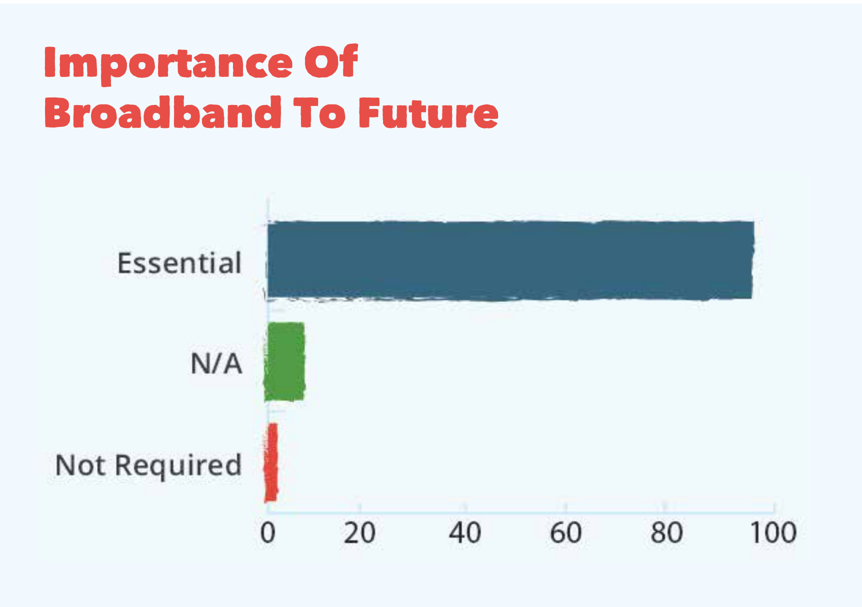


Figure 5.7



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6. COMMUNITY & SOCIETY

The survey asked people about a wide range of issues surrounding the community they lived in and their interaction with society.

Challenges Of Living In A Rural Area

People were asked about the biggest challenge they faced as a younger person living in a rural community. The wide range of answers have been categorised in Table 6.1.

Challenges Identified By Respondents

Table 6.1

Challenge	No. Identifying
Distance To Facilities - Including Shops, Leisure And Healthcare	71
Access To Work Opportunities Locally	67
Transport – Non-Specific Forms	59
Availability And Frequency Of Public Transport	46
Internet Access - Availability And Speed	43
Opportunities To Socialise	26
Distance Travelled To Work	21
Access To Car And Ability To Drive	19
Housing Availability And Cost	19
Finding Friends	18
Road Infrastructure	15
Shortage Of Social Events	12
Mobile Phone Coverage	11
Access To Higher Education	8
Costs Of Living	7
Boredom	5
Isolation	5
Freight Costs (Goods In And Out)	4
No Challenges	15

It is clear from the above responses that transportation issues manifest themselves in several forms and are closely related to distance from the higher order services located outside rural areas – including workplaces, retail, leisure, and healthcare. We have included the most frequent challenges identified (respondents could identify as many as they wished). However there were other responses raising a wide range of issues and concerns – often inter-related and with potentially important consequences for the sustainability of rural communities.

In Table 6.2 we have sought to classify and map these responses and the potential (italicised) consequences in the longer term for rural communities.

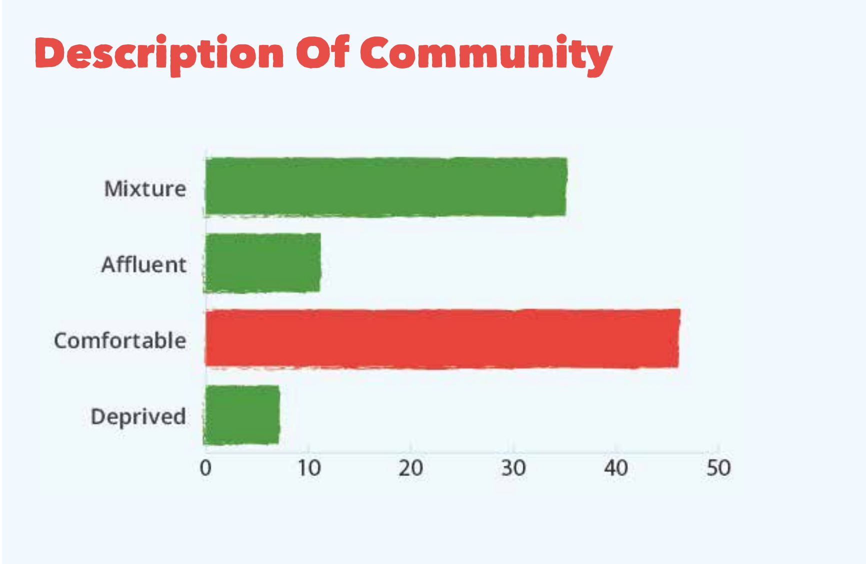
Themes, Issues And Potential Consequences

Table 6.2

Theme	Issues	Potential consequences
Work	Limited opportunities locally Travel distance to work	Lower net incomes Potential to cause out-migration of young people Threat to community sustainability
Travel and Transport	Public transport provision & frequency Access to car Ability to drive Time expended Cost incurred	Impeding access to opportunities Potential to cause out-migration of young people Threat to community sustainability
Housing	Availability Cost	Delaying household formation Potential to cause out-migration of young people Threat to community sustainability
Community Facilities	Lack of local community facilities Distance to next nearest facilities	Restriction of leisure & shopping Restricted access to healthcare Impact on health and wellbeing
Social Life	Opportunities to socialise Lack of venues and activities Finding new friends Losing friends who move away	Boredom Isolation Loneliness Impact on health and wellbeing
Communicating	Broadband service and cost Mobile phone coverage	Exclusion from digital services and opportunities, including education, training and business development Threat to community sustainability
Attitudes	Diversity and inclusion Resistance to change Generational gulf Inertia	Disillusion Isolation Exclusion Impact on health and wellbeing
Economic Exclusion	Transport cost Housing cost Goods and services cost	Diminished standard of living Impact on health and wellbeing Threat to community sustainability

Respondents were asked to select a description which they considered most relevant to their community. The findings are shown in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1



These findings are interesting in the context of the challenges previously identified by the respondents. Only 7% considered their community as “deprived” and the majority considered they lived in a community they would best describe as “comfortable”.

Local Facilities

We also sought the respondents’ assessment of their access to locally-based shops, healthcare and sports facilities. Their responses, detailed in Figure 6.2, are again quite positive with significant proportions rating access as “good” or “very good”.

Figure 6.2

Photos by Dani Vivanco / Ben Weber on Unsplash

Healthcare

We asked respondents to identify which specific changes would best improve local healthcare services. The findings are detailed in Table 6.3.

Improving Access To Healthcare

Table 6.3

Answer Choices	Responses*	
	%	No.
More doctors' appointments	54.46%	226
Out of hours appointments	46.51%	193
More information about what's available	35.90%	149
Closer Accident & Emergency facilities	31.33%	130
Specialist clinics (e.g. family planning, STD clinics etc.)	28.92%	120
More National Health services locally (e.g. dentist/ optician)	27.95%	116
A healthcare facility that is closer to where I live/work	21.69%	90
Closer maternity care facilities	17.59%	73

Multiple responses allowed*

Respondents were most interested in securing access to healthcare professionals through additional appointments both during existing surgery hours and out of hours. It is interesting to note that just 22% considered access could be improved through a healthcare facility closer to where they lived.

Photo by Ben Den Engelsen on Unsplash

Housing

People were asked about the challenges they faced in relation to housing and their responses are detailed in Table 6.4.

Main Housing Challenges Faced

Table 6.4

Answer Choices	Responses	
	%	No.
Expensive	58.6%	259
Saving a deposit is difficult	43.2%	191
Limited availability	40.1%	177
Poor public transport	38.0%	168
Poor access to public transport	33.0%	146
Lack of local facilities	29.4%	130
Lack of properties with land	18.6%	82
Anti-social behaviour in neighbourhood	13.1%	58
Poor quality	12.4%	55
Limited properties that will allow pets	11.8%	52
Properties are too big	9.7%	43
No garden	8.8%	39
Properties are too small	7.7%	34
Lack of furnished properties	5.4%	24
Lack of unfurnished properties	2.3%	10

It is clear that the costs of housing, and market entry barriers in the form of deposit requirements, are the greatest impediments for young people looking for accommodation. There is also a perceived lack of available housing, and people have concerns over the connectivity of the housing stock with access to public transport a particular issue.

Social Life

People were asked about the types of social activities they undertook in their communities with responses listed in Table 6.5.

Involvement In Social Activities

Table 6.5

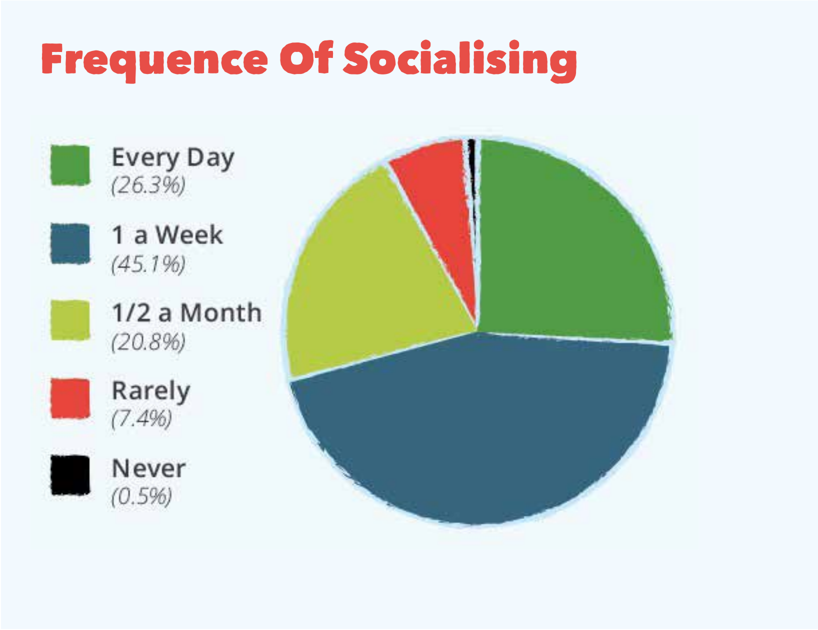
Answer Choices	Responses*	
	%	No.
Meet friends	71.9%	310
Visit pubs/bars/clubs	67.5%	291
Visit friends' houses	65.4%	282
Leisure activity (e.g. horse riding, walking etc.)	54.8%	236
Eat out	54.5%	235
Young Farmers Club	38.5%	166
Sports club or team	27.8%	120
Ceilidhs	13.5%	58
Youth club	11.4%	49
Local business group	5.8%	25

Multiple responses allowed*

Photo by Jared Sluyter on Unsplash

Informal meeting with friends at home and in pubs and clubs predominates, with eating out and shared leisure activities also important. Young Farmers Clubs are the most cited organised social groups attended by the respondents. People were asked how often they socialised and provided the responses illustrated in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3



Over a quarter of respondents stated that they socialised every day and the majority (over 70%) socialised at least once a week. However almost one-third of respondents were infrequent socialisers, seeing others no more than once or twice a month.

People were asked to identify if a range of suggestions would improve their social life, and their responses are detailed in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6

Answer Choices	Responses*	
	%	No.
More activities to meet people	61.3%	258
More young people in my area	55.6%	234
More local events or clubs	54.2%	228
Better transport to towns/cities	50.1%	211
Closer pubs/bars	36.8%	155
Closer sports/ leisure facilities	32.8%	138

Multiple responses allowed*

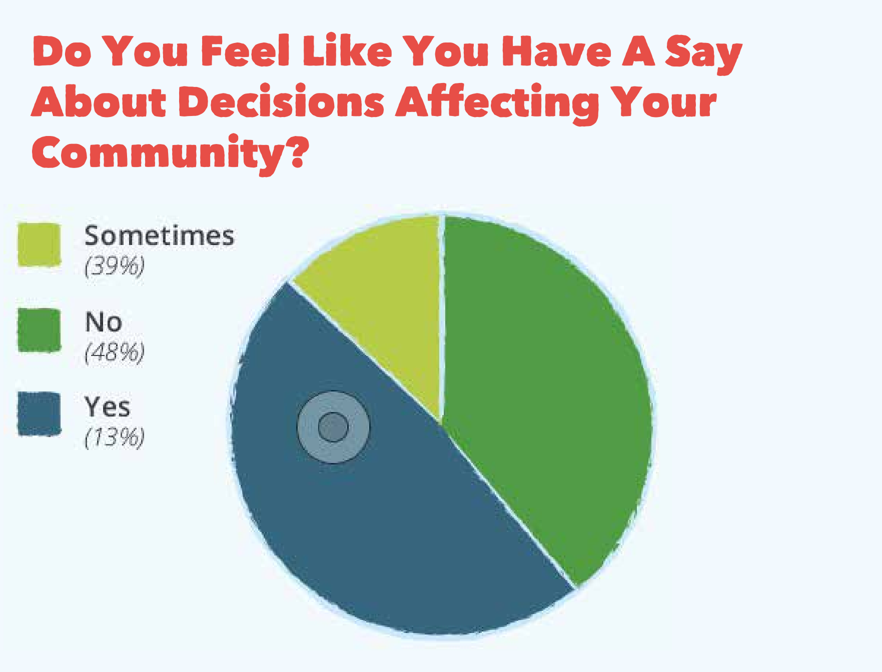
There was a strong interest in having more activities to meet people in the area, although it is also apparent that respondents would like to have more young people living in their area. More local events and clubs were also of interest, although there was also a desire for better transport links to social opportunities in towns and cities outside the area.

Photo by Tim Bennett on Unsplash

Representation And Local Decisions

Those surveyed were asked if they felt they had a say in the decisions affecting their community. Their responses are illustrated in Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4



Almost half of the respondents considered that they did not have a say in decisions affecting their communities, and only 13% considered they had. Almost 40% considered they only had a say in some instances.

Photos by Helena Lopez / Abigail Keenan on Unsplash

When asked about those aspects where they would like to have more representation in advance of decision making the respondents provided a range of interests which have been classified and ordered in frequency of identification in Table 6.7.

Areas Where More Of A Say Is Required

Table 6.7

Primary or only area identified	
Transport	131
Education	69
Housing	33
Community Development & Facilities	19
All	15
Local Taxes and Investment	11
Events & Activities	6
Healthcare	5
Land Use Planning	5
Broadband	4
Business Development	3
Environment	3
Community Safety & Policing	3
Don't know or unclassifiable	29

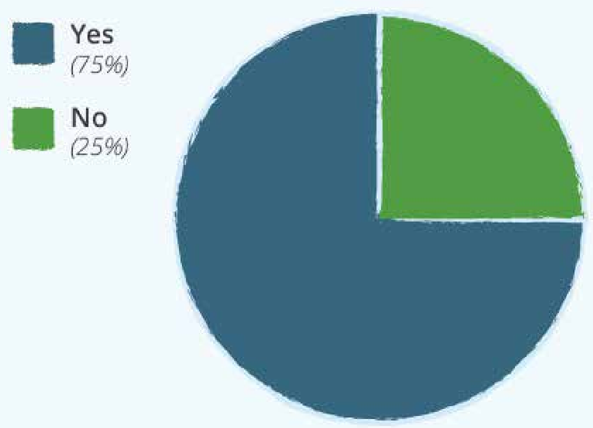
Whilst the prominence of transportation and housing as areas where input is sought is consistent with other survey results, education emerges here as a key issue. It is perhaps surprising that broadband is less frequently identified – although this may reflect the fact that this is not a public service and is normally provided by commercial operators.

Clubs And Volunteering

Respondents were asked if they had been members of a youth group or organisation whilst growing up. The results are shown in Figure 6.6 and reveal that three-quarters had been.

Figure 6.6

Attendance At Clubs And Societies When Growing Up



Further analysis of the organisations they had been members of identified the range and numbers detailed in Table 6.7.

Club & Society Membership Growing Up

Table 6.7

Young Farmers	119
Sports Club	42
Uniform (Guides, Scouts etc.)	17
Church	11
Agricultural Society	9
Volunteer Service	9
Environment & Wildlife	8
Theatre and Arts	7
School or College Society	4
Don't know or unclassifiable	92

Photo by Anton Darius on Unsplash

We also asked the respondents about the longer term benefits from these memberships which they continue to draw on in their life today. Their responses are detailed in Table 6.8 and demonstrate the contribution of youth groups to the ongoing development of young people and the communities they live in.

Benefits Of Youth Club Attendance

Table 6.8

Answer Choices	Responses*	
	%	No.
I have continued to learn and develop new skills	75.6%	257
I have continued to enjoy working as part of a group or team	68.5%	233
I manage personal, social and formal relationships	64.4%	219
I have broadened my perspectives through new experiences and thinking	60.3%	205
I am confident, resilient and optimistic for the future	56.2%	191
I can express my voice and demonstrate social commitment	54.7%	186
I consider risk and make reasoned decisions	40.6%	138

Multiple responses allowed*

Finally we asked the respondents about their volunteering activity and received the responses illustrated in Figure 6.7. These demonstrate a high propensity to volunteer with over two-thirds currently volunteering or having previously volunteered.

Figure 6.7

Volunteering Activity Past/Present

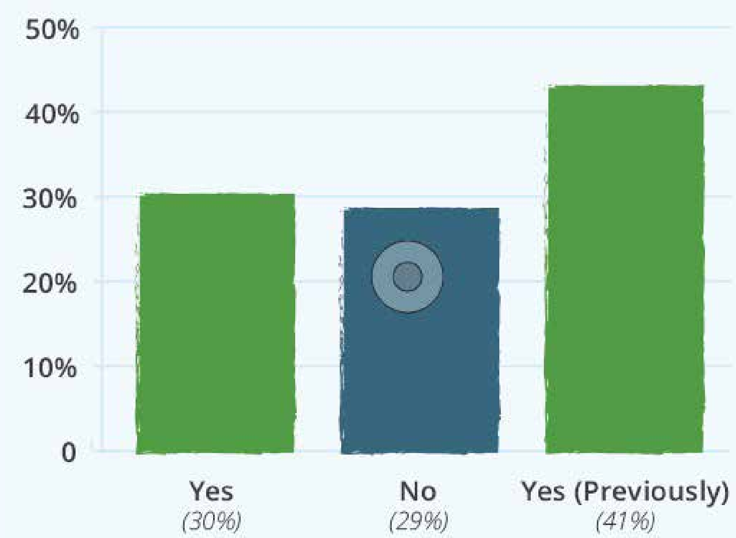


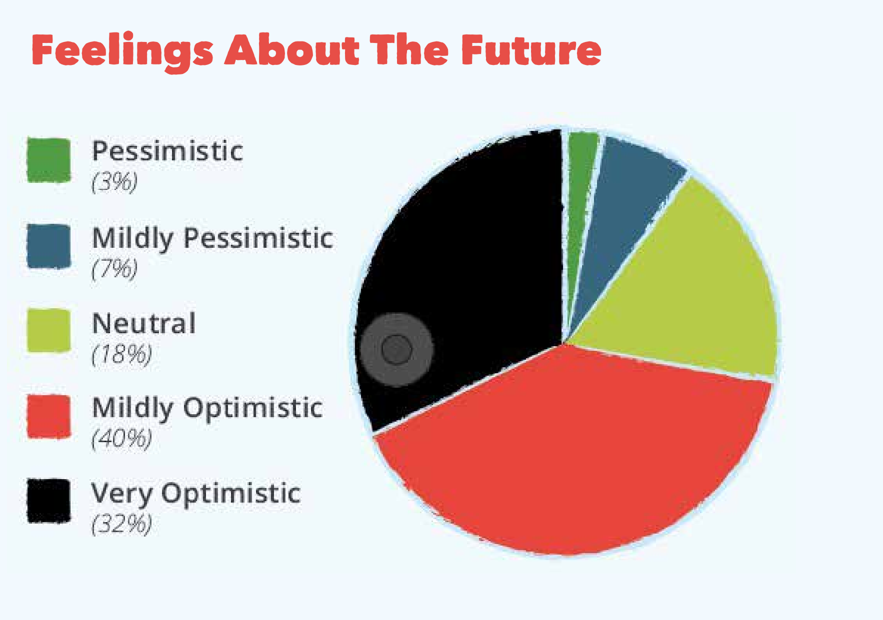
Photo by Dane Deaner on Unsplash

The Future

We asked the respondents how they felt about the future. The results (illustrated in Figure 6.8) are encouraging – with 72% feeling optimistic (very or mildly) and only 10% expressing some degree of pessimism.

This suggests that young people in rural areas are embracing their futures – although a comparison with those of the same age living in urban areas would be needed to be wholly conclusive on this.

Figure 6.8



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Back page photo by Andreas Dress on Unsplash

7. CONCLUSIONS

This report highlights some important findings for any organisation or individual interested in the opinions and outlook of rural young people and better understanding their current situation, aspirations, opportunities and challenges.

1. 81% of respondents live where they do because of their relationships with family or partners (57%), or for their work (24%), suggesting that, for some, their living arrangements may be driven by emotional ties, circumstance or obligation, as well as choice. A high number of respondents stated their involvement in farming to give this conclusion context.
2. Interlinked issues of limited employment opportunities, insufficient or expensive housing and poor transport make living in rural places challenging both practically and economically for rural young people.
3. Inadequate availability and cost of housing were highlighted as challenges for rural young people. This is a concern and a threat to community sustainability if the result is net migration towards urban places.
4. The gross average earnings of respondents were highlighted as being lower than the national average. The average earnings of respondents was £16,600 (£320/week). The national average is £337/week for males aged 18-21 and £477.90 for males aged 22-29; for females, the average is £309.6 for 18-21 yrs and £440.8 for 22-29yrs.
5. 45% of respondents said they find it difficult to find work close to where they live, so either have to travel to work (average 4.4 miles) or a third of respondents take multiple jobs to earn their living.
6. The survey highlights the importance of rural young people either having their own car or having access to lifts or lift share to travel to their work, work-related or personal activities.
7. Public transport was described by 61% as poor or very poor whilst just 13% described it as good or very good. The improvements to transport suggested were: more transport options, increased service frequency and community bus schemes.
8. Community services were widely regarded as lacking or a long way from respondents' homes. The main restrictions cited were access to leisure facilities, healthcare and shopping. All of these issues have an impact on health and wellbeing.
9. Given the importance of the social life of young people, the lack of venues and activities cited by respondents raises concerns surrounding boredom, isolation and loneliness.
10. Digital connectivity via mobile and internet were cited as essential for the future of young people in rural places (94%), however current slow speeds and poor mobile phone coverage seriously impact their lives. 36% have internet speeds of less than 4MB per second and 12% cited no mobile signal. Poor access to digital services could exclude rural young people from a range of digital services, included those related to business operation, skills and training as well as social interaction.
11. Only 13% of the young people who responded felt that they have a say in the future of their communities.
12. Despite issues with transport, housing, connectivity, job opportunities and the range of social activities available to young people, over 70% are optimistic about the future. However, long-term economic isolation is a concern.

RuralYouthProject

www.ruralyouthproject.com
hello@ruralyouthproject.com

@RYP2018
@RuralYouthProject
@ryp2018

janecraigie marketing

www.janecraigie.com
hello@janecraigie.com

@JCMandCo
@jcmandco
Jane Craigie Marketing Ltd

Initiated and managed by:

janecraigie marketing

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