

Land Use and Rural Policy Research Programme

Living In Scotland: An Urban-Rural Analysis of The Scottish Household Survey

Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Development Department, Social Research Division, with assistance from the Scottish Agricultural College

The purpose of this research was to identify and analyse differences and similarities in the demographic and socio-economic circumstances of urban areas, small towns and rural areas in Scotland, based upon data from the 1999-2000 Scottish Household Survey. The research examined the characteristics of households and individuals in urban and rural Scotland; economic activity and employment; income and poverty; health and access to health services; and neighbourhood and community life.

Main Findings

- There are significant differences between urban and rural Scotland in many aspects of life. Most of these are unsurprising; however, the data also indicates that urban and rural areas share many features.
- The demographic characteristics of households in rural areas and small towns did not differ significantly from those of larger urban areas.
- Employment rates were highest in accessible rural areas, while unemployment was slightly more common in large urban areas and remote small towns. Self-employment was more common in both accessible and remote rural areas. The proportions of both students and permanently sick or disabled respondents were relatively greater in the larger cities.
- Over one quarter of Scottish households had an annual net income of over £20,000 per year; however, this rose to over one-third in accessible rural areas. 15% of all respondents claimed that they were not managing well financially, this was slightly more common in large urban areas.
- 16% of respondents in large and other urban areas reported poor health, compared with a national average of 15% and a low of 11% in remote rural areas.
- 91% of SHS respondents rated their local neighbourhood as either a fairly or very good place to live. Urban and rural inhabitants benefit from different things: those in urban areas particularly value the convenience of services, while rural inhabitants rate the attractiveness of their environment.
- Levels of social interaction and trust are high throughout Scotland, but the extent of community involvement appear slightly higher in rural areas.

Introduction

This analysis was undertaken to contribute to the understanding of life in contemporary urban and rural Scotland, and in particular to identify differences within rural areas.

The study involved analysis of *Scottish Household Survey* data on the characteristics of households and individuals; economic activity and employment; income and poverty; health and access to health services; and neighbourhood and community life. In addition, the circumstances of particular social groups were explored: lone parents, adults with disabilities, adults aged over 50, and working age adults.

The Survey

The *Scottish Household Survey* (SHS) is an annual survey which started in 1999. It collects information on a wide range of social and economic issues from a sample of approximately 15,000 households across Scotland.

Each household surveyed is classified according to an 8-fold typology of urban-rural areas. This classification is based on the criteria of population size and remoteness (measured by drive time). Due to small sample sizes in certain areas, this 8-fold typology is often collapsed into 6 categories: large urban areas, other urban areas, small accessible towns, small remote towns, accessible rural areas, and remote rural areas. This classification enables detailed exploration of differences based on geography and topography.

Social and Demographic Characteristics

The effects of life-cycle migration result in proportionally more single person (non-pensioner) households in large urban areas (21% compared to a national average of 16%). Rural areas contained slightly higher proportions of older, smaller households, usually pensioner couples: 18% of all households in remote rural areas compared to a national average of 14%. Accessible small towns also had an above average proportion of small, older households.

Rural areas had more residents from the managerial and professional classes than urban areas (24-25% compared to a national average of 20%). There was also a slightly higher proportion rural and remote residents who possessed a degree or professional qualification (18-19% compared to a national average of 16%).

Rural residents were more likely to own cars than urban dwellers (54% in remote rural areas compared to 39% in large urban areas). There was also more owner-occupation and less socially rented housing tenure in rural areas (70% owning outright or buying with a mortgage in accessible rural areas, compared to 57% in large urban areas).

Economic Activity and Employment

Those in large urban areas were least likely to be in employment: 47% compared with 57% in accessible rural areas. Unemployment was also highest in large urban areas (5% compared to a 4% national average) and lowest in accessible rural areas (3%); but these two areas contained similar levels of retired residents (24-25%).

In terms of full time employment, the main occupational difference was between accessible and remote areas rather than between urban and rural areas. This perhaps reflects commuting from accessible rural to more urban areas.

Remote small towns show a distinctive employment profile among full time workers. These areas possessed above average proportions of skilled manual workers and foremen/supervisors (18% and 12% in comparison to the national averages of 15% and 8% respectively). However, they had below average numbers of professionals (3% compared with 6% nationally).

Self-employment was more common in both accessible and remote rural areas (8% and 11% respectively, compared with 5% nationally). Among the self-employed, almost one third living in remote small towns were classified as employers and managers of small establishments, compared to a national average of 21%. Self-employed workers in large urban areas were more likely to be professional than those in remote small towns (14% in comparison to 7%). 5% all self-employed respondents held more than one job, as did 6% of part-time and 3% of full-time employees. There was some evidence that multiple job-holding was more common in rural and remote areas, but this was not a conspicuous difference.

26% of permanently sick or disabled people in accessible rural areas were in employment, compared with 15% in large urban areas, and a national average of 17%.

Income and Poverty

Almost two in five Scottish households had an income of less than £10,000 per year. Lower incomes are more common at

both ends of the rural-urban continuum; i.e. in the large cities and in the remote rural areas.

Just over one quarter of Scottish households had a net income of £20,000 or more per year; the proportion rose to over one third in accessible rural areas.

Over half of households indicated that they had some savings or investments. This was highest in rural areas: 64% in accessible rural areas and 66% in remote rural areas compared with 53% nationally. However, 15% of respondents reported that they were not managing well financially, had some financial difficulties or were experiencing deep financial difficulties. There were no statistically significant differences between different areas.

60% of lone parents reported an annual income of less than £10,000. More than one-third also felt that they were not managing well financially, and lone parents living in remote rural areas were particularly likely to suffer financial hardship (45% compared to a national average of 37%).

Almost two thirds of pensioner households in Scotland had an annual income of less than £10,000; these were more common in urban areas and remote small towns. Pensioners with incomes above £20,000 pa were more common in the accessible and remote rural areas (10% and 9% respectively of all pensioner households, compared to national average 6%).

Health and Access to Health Services

Respondents in rural areas were slightly less likely than urban residents to report a combination of ill health and limiting longstanding disability or poor health. Unskilled manual workers across all areas were most likely to suffer ill health.

Living in remote or rural areas did not appear to be a significant deterrent from using GP services. Overall, 81% of the population reported that it was very or fairly convenient to access their GP. Access was rated most convenient in remote small towns (89%) and least convenient in accessible rural areas (77%) and remote rural areas (79%). Nine out of ten respondents who had visited their GP recently reported that they were either very or fairly satisfied with their treatment, and this level was sustained across all areas.

However, there was greater urban-rural variation in perceived accessibility to chemists. Almost one third of respondents in remote rural areas reported it inconvenient to access this service, compared to less than one tenth in urban and small town areas.

Neighbourhood and Community

91% of all respondents rated their area as either a fairly or very good place to live; this fell to 87% in large urban areas compared to 95% in rural and remote areas.

Urban residents particularly appreciate the convenience of services and facilities in their areas (e.g. transport and shops), while rural dwellers are more likely to mention the attractiveness of the local environment.

Residents of remote small towns express similar levels of satisfaction concerning access to and quality of local services to those in larger urban areas, and so might be benefiting from living in self-sufficient centres of service provision.

The contrast between urban and rural areas in relation to certain neighbourhood problems is clear but not surprising: respondents in urban areas are more concerned than those in rural areas about young people hanging around, vandalism, crime and substance misuse.

50% of respondents in remote rural areas reported a fair amount or great deal of community involvement, compared with less than one quarter in accessible small towns and urban areas

Levels of trust between friends and neighbours appears high throughout Scotland (e.g. 85% of respondents could receive support from neighbours and friends). Such levels were slightly higher in rural areas than in small towns or urban areas.

About the study

This report was based on analysis of data from the *Scottish Household Survey* for 1999 and 2000. The analysis was undertaken by social researchers within the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Development Department, with assistance from the Scottish Agricultural College.

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The report "Living in Scotland: An Urban-Rural Analysis of the Scottish Household Survey", which is summarised in this Research Findings is available on the Social Research Website only (www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch).

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