



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Statistical Digest of Rural England

Wellbeing, volunteering and charity

This document is part of the larger compendium publication the [Statistical Digest of Rural England](#), a collection of rural statistics on a wide range of social and economic government policy areas.

The Statistical Digest of Rural England is an official statistics publication meaning these statistics have been produced to the high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

More information on the Official Statistics Code of Practice can be found on the [Code of Practice web pages](#).

These statistics allow comparisons between the different rural and urban area classifications. The Rural-Urban Classification is used to distinguish rural and urban areas. The Classification defines areas as rural if they fall outside of settlements with more than 10,000 resident population.

More information on the Rural-Urban Classification can be found on the [Rural-Urban Classification web pages](#).

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

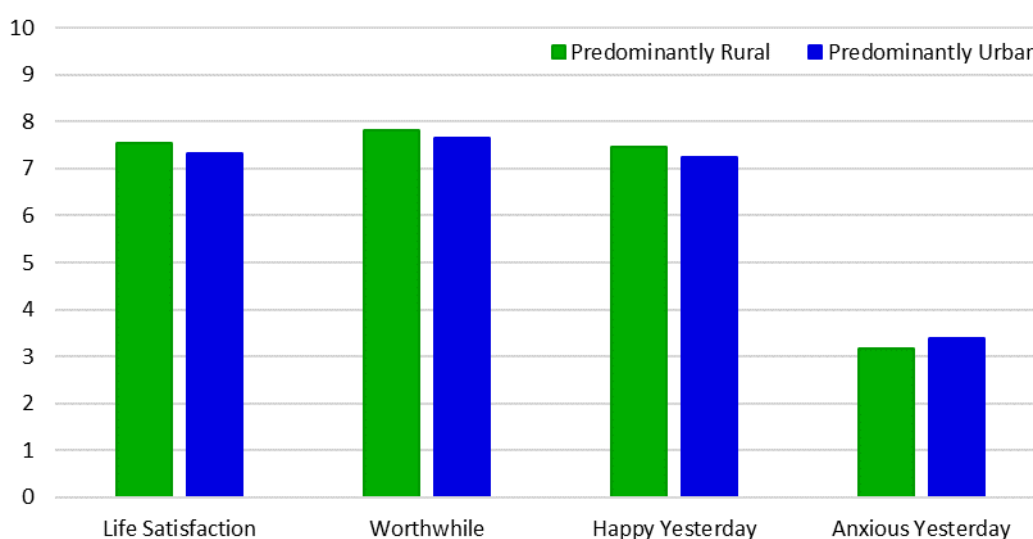
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Wellbeing

- In 2020/21 on average people living in Predominantly Rural areas rated their wellbeing as slightly better than those in Predominantly Urban areas, although the difference is small. Individuals were asked questions on life satisfaction, how happy and how anxious they were yesterday and how worthwhile the things they do are (in respect of being anxious, a lower score indicates a more positive response).
- The difference in wellbeing ratings between rural and urban areas is small but consistent across these four measures over time.
- It should be noted that the populations in rural and urban areas differ, particularly in age structure and in terms of others measures such as deprivation. Such differences are likely to affect reported measures of wellbeing, so comparisons should be made with caution.

Average ratings (out of ten) on four measures of wellbeing, by rural and urban areas in England, 2020/21

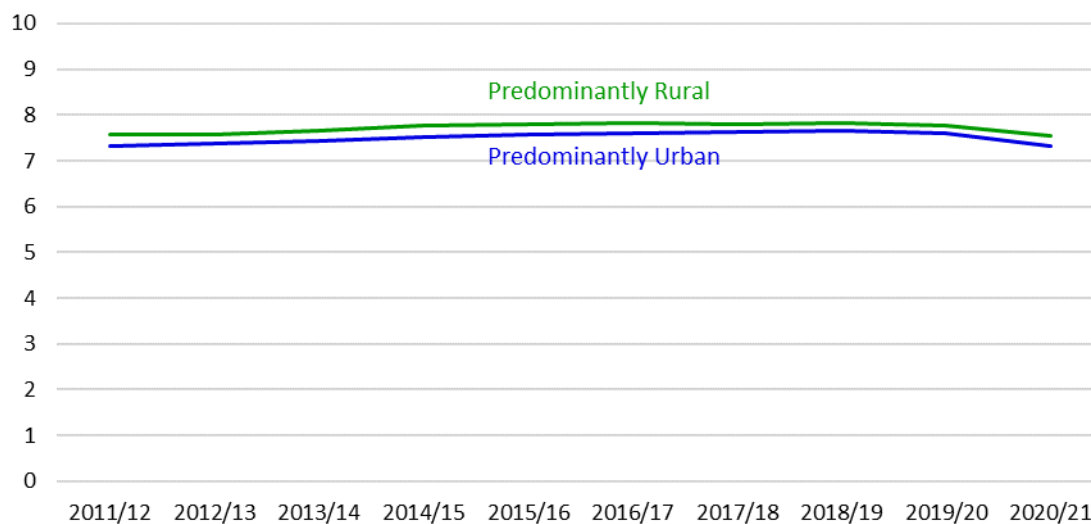


Average ratings (out of ten) on four measures of wellbeing, by local authority rural-urban classification in England, 2020/21

	Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?	Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?	Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?	Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?
Urban with Major Conurbation	7.3	7.6	7.2	3.4
Urban with Minor Conurbation	7.2	7.7	7.1	3.5
Urban with City and Town	7.4	7.7	7.3	3.3
Urban with Significant Rural	7.4	7.7	7.4	3.2
Largely Rural	7.5	7.8	7.5	3.2
Mainly Rural	7.6	7.9	7.5	3.1
Predominantly Urban	7.3	7.7	7.3	3.4
Predominantly Rural	7.5	7.8	7.5	3.2
England	7.4	7.7	7.3	3.3

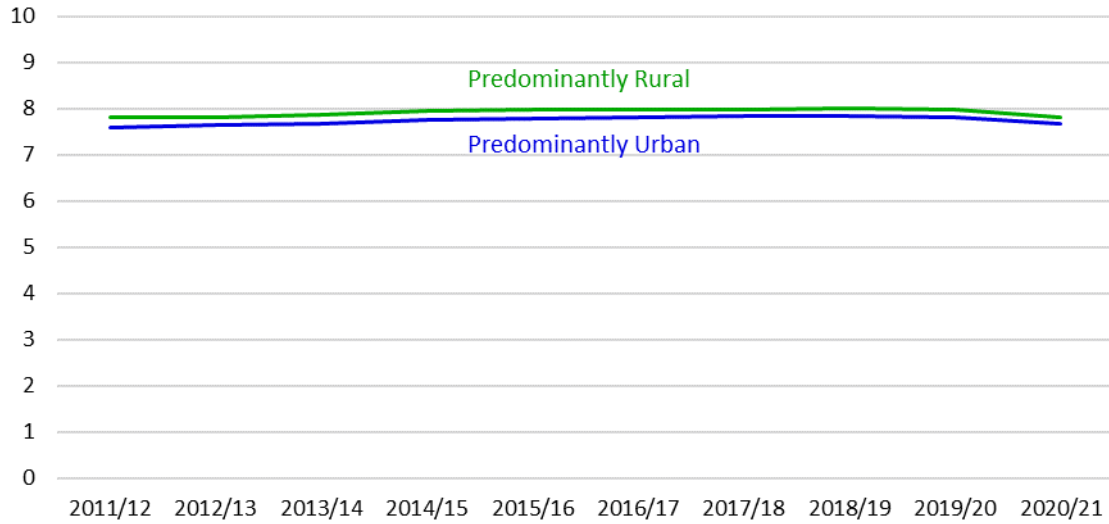
- When asked ‘Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?’ on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is ‘not at all satisfied’ and 10 is ‘completely satisfied’ those living in Predominantly Rural areas gave an average rating of 7.5 compared with an average rating of 7.3 given by those living in Predominantly Urban areas.
- When asked ‘Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?’ on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is ‘not at all worthwhile’ and 10 is ‘completely worthwhile’ those living in Predominantly Rural areas gave an average rating of 7.8 compared with an average rating of 7.7 given by those living in Predominantly Urban areas.
- When asked ‘Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?’ on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is ‘not at all happy’ and 10 is ‘completely happy’ those living in Predominantly Rural areas gave an average rating of 7.5 compared with an average rating of 7.3 given by those living in Predominantly Urban areas.
- When asked ‘Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?’ on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is ‘not at all anxious’ and 10 is ‘completely anxious’ those living in Predominantly Rural areas gave an average rating of 3.2 compared with an average rating of 3.4 given by those living in Predominantly Urban areas.

Average ratings (out of ten) on the question “Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?”, by local authority rural-urban classification in England, 2011/12 - 2020/21



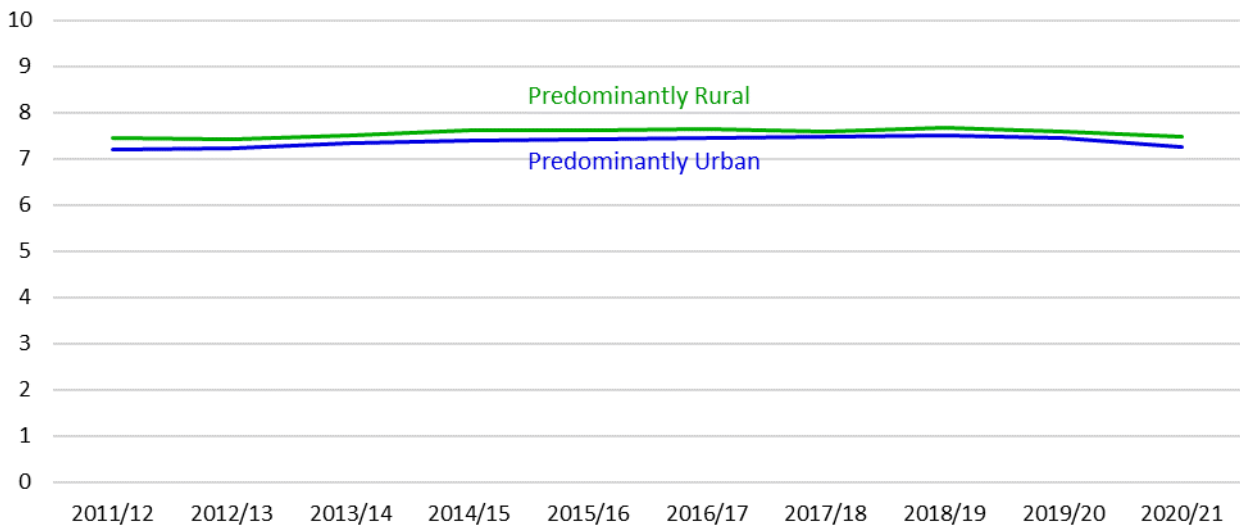
Life Satisfaction	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Predominantly Rural	7.6	7.6	7.7	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.5
Predominantly Urban	7.3	7.4	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.3
England	7.4	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.6	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.4

Average ratings (out of ten) on the question “Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?”, by local authority rural-urban classification in England, 2011/12 - 2020/21



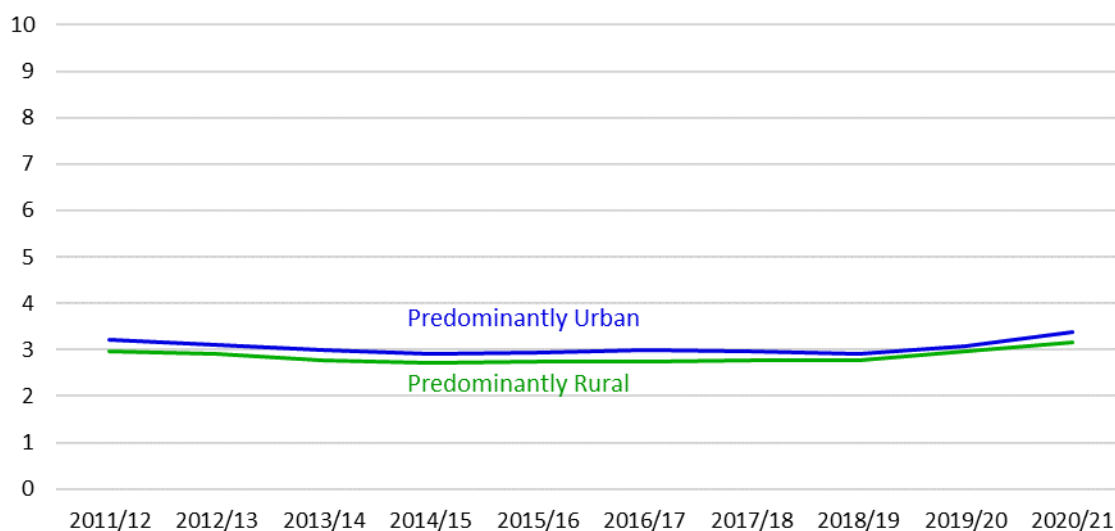
Worthwhile	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Predominantly Rural	7.8	7.8	7.9	7.9	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	7.8
Predominantly Urban	7.6	7.6	7.7	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.7
England	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.8	7.8	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.7

Average ratings (out of ten) on the question “Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?”, by local authority rural-urban classification in England, 2011/12-2020/21



Happiness	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Predominantly Rural	7.4	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.7	7.6	7.5
Predominantly Urban	7.2	7.2	7.3	7.4	7.4	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.4	7.3
England	7.3	7.3	7.4	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.6	7.5	7.3

Average ratings (out of ten) on the question “Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?”, by local authority rural-urban classification in England, 2011/12 - 2020/21



Anxiety	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Predominantly Rural	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	3.0	3.2
Predominantly Urban	3.2	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.1	3.4
England	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.3

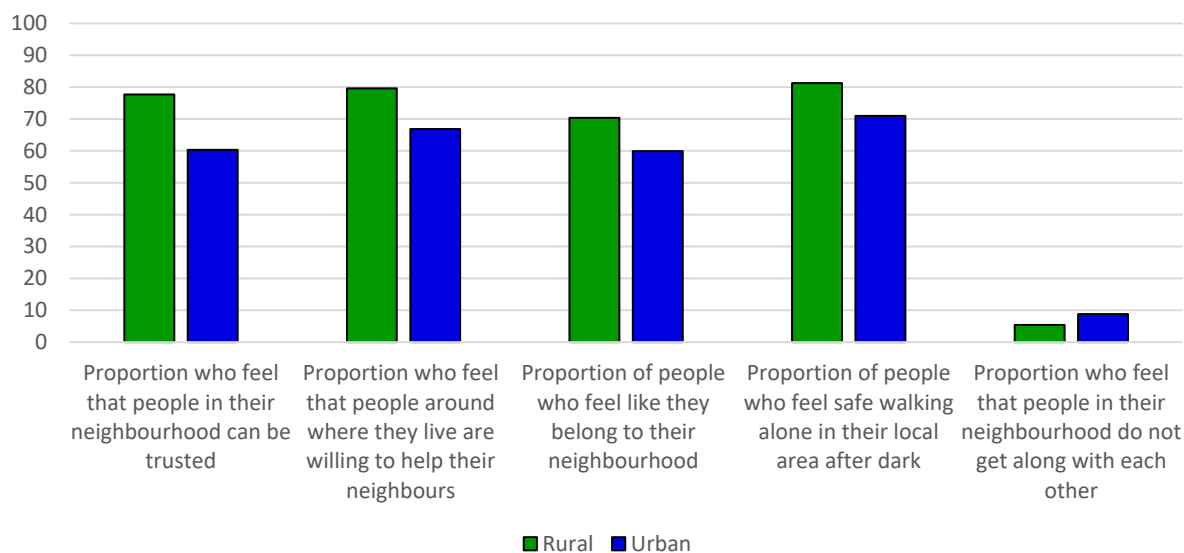
- Each category fared negatively compared to the year before in terms of an increased level of anxiety and reduced life satisfaction, sense of worthwhile, and happiness. This could be an effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, and so caution should be taken when making comparisons.
- There was a very slight upward trend in the ratings for ‘life satisfaction’, ‘life worthwhile’ and ‘happiness yesterday’ across all areas between 2011/12 and 2018/19. However, in 2019/20 there was a slight decrease in these ratings, followed by a major decrease in 2020/21 for both rural and urban areas.
- Ratings of ‘anxiousness yesterday’ fell in both rural and urban areas between 2011/12 and 2014/15, remained largely the same until 2018/19, then rose until present; the ratings in 2020/21 are the highest so far in the time period.
- The differences between rural and urban areas are very small, however those living in Predominantly Rural areas consistently show slightly better ratings of reported well-being than those living in Predominantly Urban areas over this time period.

Notes: These data were originally collected as part of the Annual Population Survey (APS). The data presented here are reflective of the position for March 2020-March 2021.

Source: [ONS Annual personal well-being estimates](#)

- In 2011/12 a higher proportion of people living in rural areas reported a sense of belonging and safety in their local neighbourhood compared with those living in urban areas across several measures of 'neighbourliness', such as trust in those in their neighbourhood, helpfulness of those in the neighbourhood, a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood and feeling safe walking alone after dark. When asked whether they felt that people in the neighbourhood did not get along with one another, those living in urban areas were more likely to feel this way than those living in rural ones.

Percentage of people who agreed with each statement, by rural and urban areas in England, 2011/12



Percentage of people who agreed with each statement, by rural-urban classification in England, 2011/12

	Proportion who feel that people in their neighbourhood can be trusted	Proportion who feel that people around where they live are willing to help their neighbours	Proportion of people who feel like they belong to their neighbourhood	Proportion of people who feel safe walking alone in their local area after dark	Proportion who feel that people in their neighbourhood do not get along with each other
Rural	78%	80%	70%	81%	5%
Urban	60%	67%	60%	71%	9%
England	64%	69%	62%	73%	8%

- When asked whether they felt that people in their neighbourhood could be trusted 78% of people living in rural areas agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, compared with 60% living in urban areas.
- When asked whether they felt that the people around where they lived were willing to help their neighbours 80% of people living in rural areas agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, compared with 67% living in urban areas.
- When asked whether they felt like they belonged to their neighbourhood 70% of people living in rural areas agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, compared with 60% living in urban areas.

- When asked whether they felt safe walking alone in their local area after dark 81% of people living in rural areas felt safe or fairly safe, compared with 71% living in urban areas.
- When asked whether they felt that the people in their neighbourhood did not get along with each other 5% of people living in rural areas agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, compared with 9% in urban areas.

Notes: These data were originally collected as part of the Longitudinal Household Survey (UKHLS) which is an annual survey that captures information about 40,000 households. These data were released by the ONS in May 2016 and are currently the most up-to-date data published for these measures.

Source: ONS measures of social capital

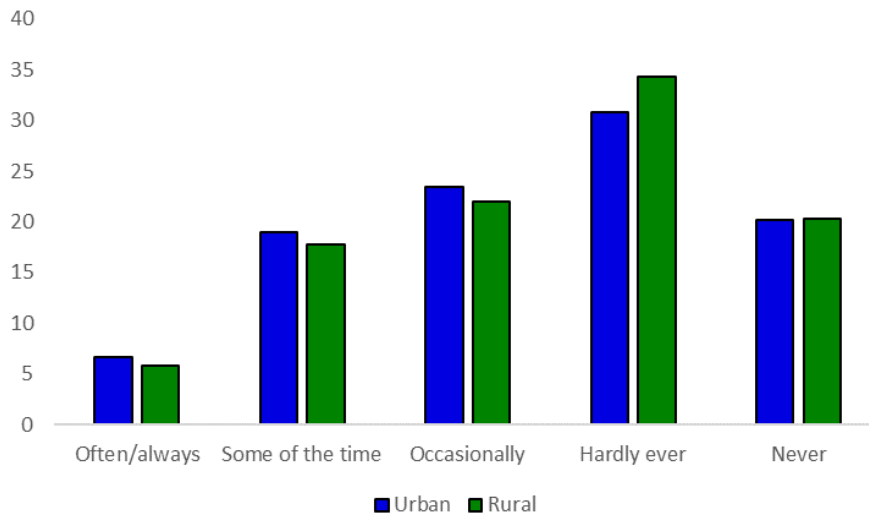
www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/5measuresofsocialcapitalbyregionandurbanand rural

Loneliness

In 2020/21 reported rates of loneliness were slightly lower in rural areas than in urban ones.

- 6 per cent of people living in rural areas report often or always feeling lonely, compared with 7 per cent of people living in urban areas.
- 34 per cent of people living in rural areas report hardly ever feeling lonely compared with 31 per cent of people living in urban areas.

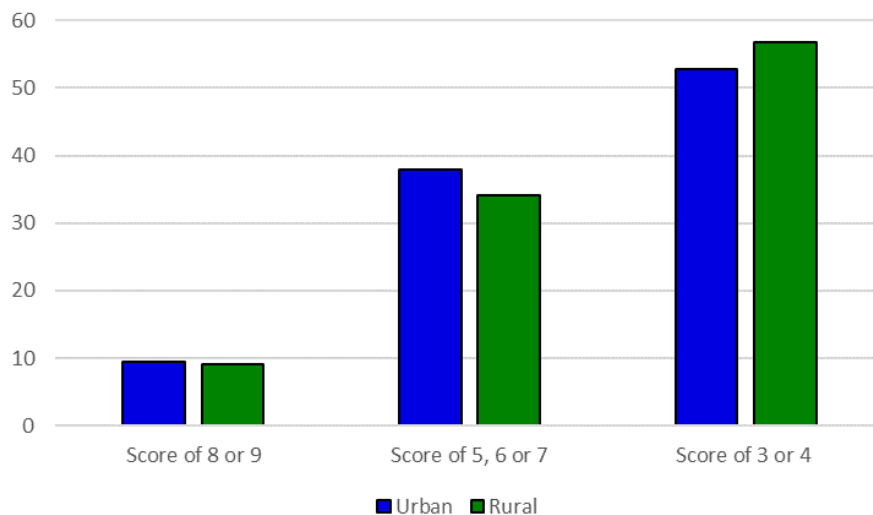
Percentage of people responding to the question “How often do you feel lonely?”, by rural-urban classification, England, 2020/21



The University of California has developed a three-item loneliness score, that takes responses from three questions and combines them into a composite loneliness score. Again, in 2020/21 people in rural areas reported a slightly lower occurrence of loneliness.

- 9 per cent of people living in both rural and urban areas score an 8 or 9.
- 34 per cent of people in rural areas scored a 5, 6 or 7 compared with 38 per cent of people in urban areas.
- 57 per cent of people in rural areas scored a 3 or 4 compared with 57 per cent in urban areas.

Percentage of people scoring different scores on the University of California’s three-item loneliness scale, England, 2020/21

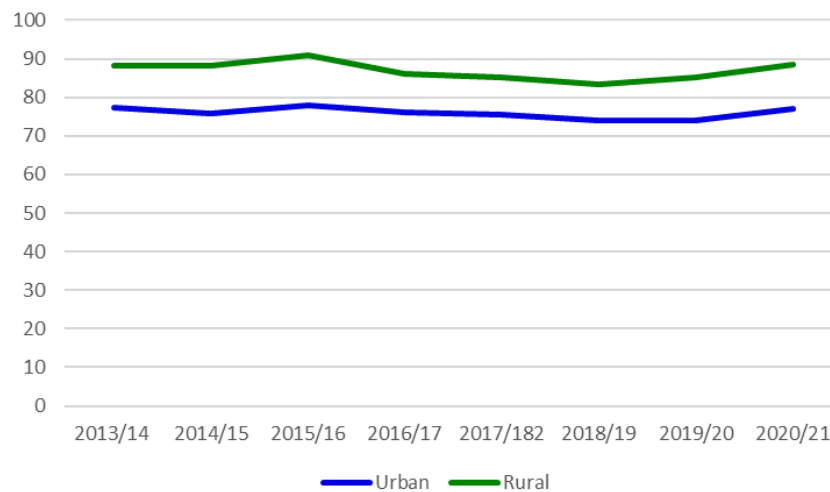


Feelings about the local neighbourhood

People living in rural areas tend to report more favourable feelings about their local neighbourhood than those living in urban areas.

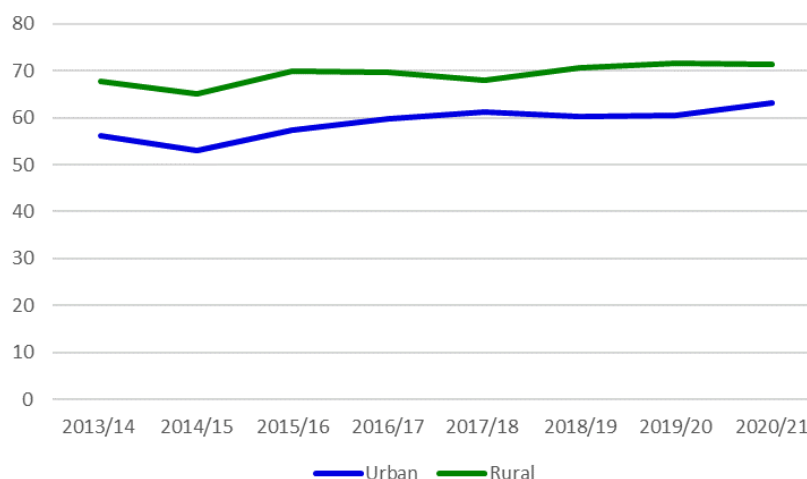
- In 2020/21 89 per cent of people living in rural areas reported that they were satisfied with their local area as a place to live, compared with 77 per cent of those living in urban areas.
- Reports of satisfaction with the local area have remained relatively consistent over time with 88 per cent of people living in rural areas reporting this in 2013/14 compared with 77 per cent in urban areas.

Percentage of people who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live, England, 2020/21



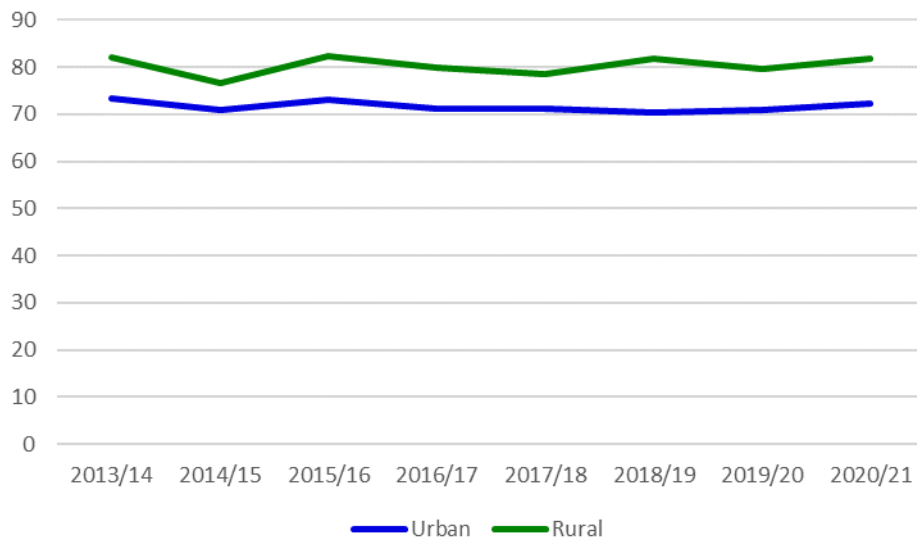
- In 2020/21, 71 per cent of people living in rural areas report feeling that they belong strongly or fairly strongly to their immediate neighbourhood, compared with 63 per cent in urban areas.
- This has risen over time in both rural and urban areas. Since 2013/14 the percentage of people reporting that they belong rose by 4 percentage points in rural areas and 7 percentage points in urban ones.

Percentage of people who feel they belong strongly or fairly strongly to their immediate neighbourhood, England, 2020/21



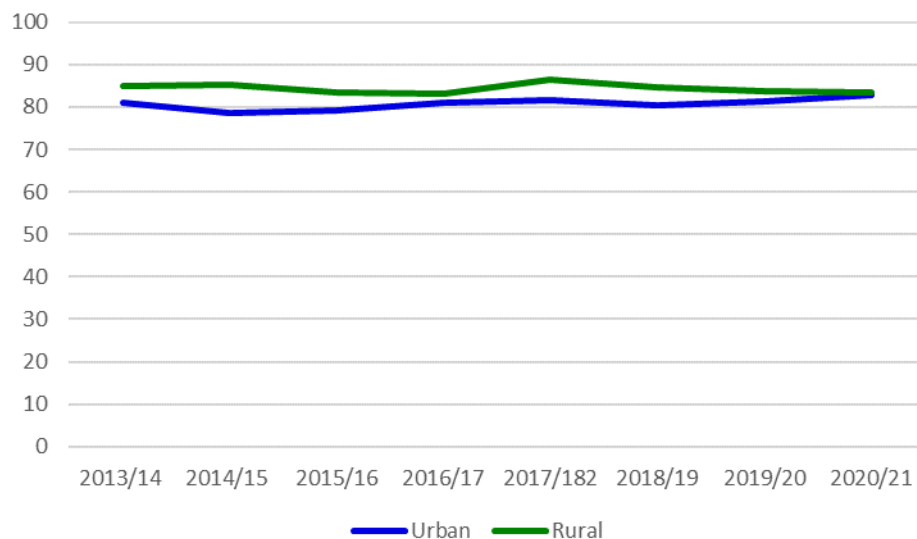
- In 2020/21, 82 per cent of people living in rural areas reported that they chat to the neighbours at least once a month (more than just to say hello), compared with 72 per cent of people living in urban areas.
- Reports of chatting regularly with neighbours have remained relatively consistent over time with 82 per cent of people living in rural areas reporting this in 2013/14 compared with 73 per cent in urban areas.

Percentage of people who chat to their neighbours (more than just to say hello) at least once a month, England, 2020/21



- In 2020/21, 84 per cent of people living in rural areas reported that they agreed that their local area is a place where people from different background get on well together, compared with 83 per cent of people living in urban areas.
- Reports of feeling that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together have remained relatively consistent over time with 85 per cent of people living in rural areas reporting this in 2013/14 compared with 81 per cent in urban areas.

Percentage of people agreeing that their local area is a place where people from different background get on well together, England, 2020/21



Notes:

The data presented on loneliness and feelings about the local neighbourhood come from the DCMS Community Life Survey.

The indirect loneliness composite score is produced by combining three indirect measures of loneliness asked in the questionnaire. More information on this measure can be found here:

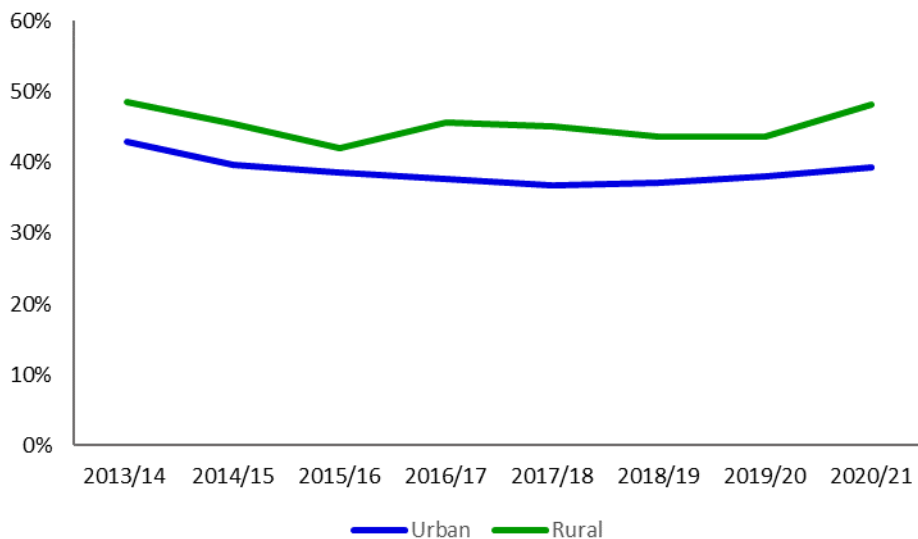
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/methodologies/measuringlonelinessguidanceforuseofthenationalindicatorsonsurveys#recommended-measures-for-adults>

Volunteering and charity

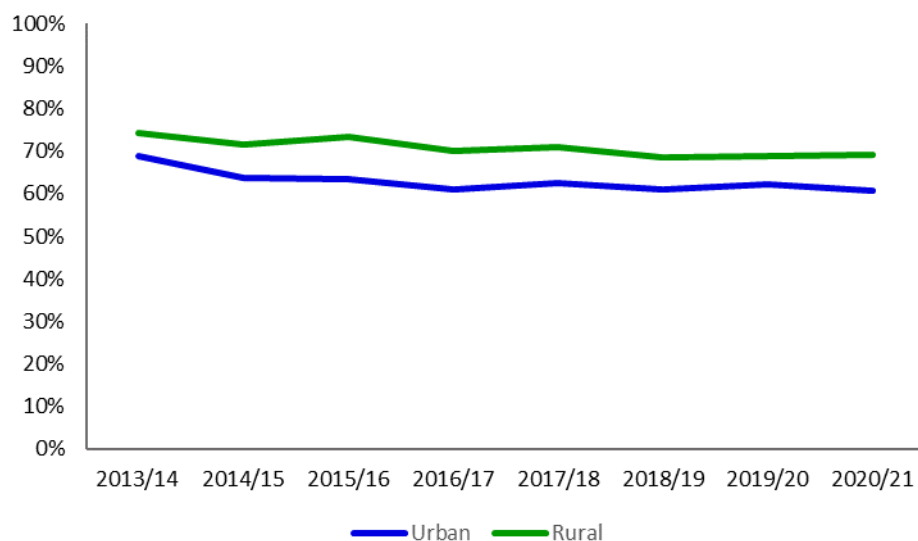
Volunteering

- In 2020/21, 48 per cent of people living in rural areas reported volunteering (either formally or informally) at least once a month, compared with 39 per cent of people living in urban areas.
- In 2020/21, 69 per cent of people living in rural areas reported volunteering (either formally or informally) at least once a year, compared with 61 per cent of people living in urban areas.
- Rates of volunteering at least once a year have fallen by 5 percentage points in rural areas and 8 percentage points in urban areas between 2013/14 and 2020/21.

Percentage of people reporting that they volunteered either formally or informally at least once a month, by rural-urban classification, England, 2013/14 - 2020/21



Percentage of people reporting that they volunteered either formally or informally at least once a year, by rural-urban classification, England, 2013/14 - 2020/21

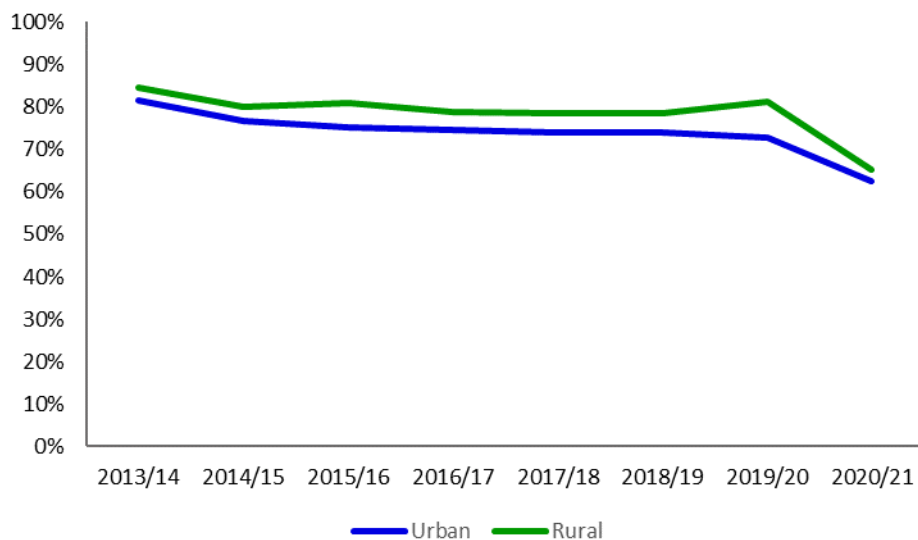


Tables detailing rates of both formal and informal volunteering broken down by broad rural-urban classification covering 2013/14 to 2020/21 are available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

Charity

- In 2020/21, 65 per cent of people living in rural areas reported giving to charity in the past four weeks, compared with 62 per cent of those in urban areas.
- People reporting having given to charity in the last four weeks has fallen by 16 percentage points in rural areas and 10 percentage points in urban areas in the last year.
- People reporting having given to charity in the last four weeks has fallen by 20 percentage points in rural areas and 19 percentage points in urban areas since 2013/14.

Percentage of people reporting that they have given to charity in the past four weeks, by rural-urban classification, England, 2013/14 - 2020/21



A table detailing rates of charitable giving in the past four weeks, broken down by broad rural-urban classification covering 2013/14 to 2020/21 is available in the [rural living supplementary data tables](#).

Notes:

Formal volunteering refers to giving unpaid help through clubs or organisations and informal volunteering refers to giving unpaid help to individuals who are not a relative.

Figures for charitable giving between 2013/14 and 2017/18 include a very small number of respondents who had only indicated they had given to charitable causes by donating goods or prizes. 2018-19 onwards only includes those who gave money to charitable causes. This will have a minimal effect on the overall estimates