



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Statistical Digest of Rural England:

3 - Health and Wellbeing

March 2024





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Cover photos

		Ward 2011	Rural-Urban Classification
TL	Helmsley marketplace	Helmsley	Rural Village and Dispersed in a sparse setting
TC	Horton-in-Ribblesdale train station with Penyghent behind	Penyghent	Rural Village and Dispersed in a sparse setting
TR	St Giles Church, Skelton	Rural West York	Rural Town and Fringe
CL	Fishing Boat, Marske-by-the-Sea with Hunt cliff in the distance	St Germain's; Saltburn	Rural Town and Fringe
CR	Thornton Force Waterfall, Ingleton Waterfalls Trail	Ingleton and Clapham	Rural Village and Dispersed in a sparse setting
BL	Farmer working the fields in Knapton	Rural West York	Rural Town and Fringe
BC	Remote pub at Ribbleshead viaduct	Ingleton and Clapham	Rural Village and Dispersed in a sparse setting
BR	Glamping pod in the North York Moors	Pickering East	Rural Town and Fringe in a sparse setting

All cover photos provided by Martin Fowell.

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About the Statistical Digest of Rural England

The Statistical Digest of Rural England (hereafter the Digest) is a collection of statistics on a range of social and economic topics and provides broad comparisons between Rural and Urban areas by settlement type. For more information on our classifications, including maps and diagrams explaining the classification, see Appendix 2: Defining Rural areas.

The Digest has been restructured into thematic reports and incorporates the previously separate publication the [Rural Economic Bulletin](#).

The Digest consists of the following thematic reports:

1. Population
2. Housing
3. Health and Wellbeing
4. Communities and Households
5. Connectivity and Accessibility
6. Education, Qualifications and Training
7. Rural Economic Bulletin
8. Energy

In March 2024 the content relating to energy that was previously split across the Housing and Communities and Households chapters has been consolidated into a new Energy report. Appendix 1, shows the sub-themes within each of the 8 Digest reports. Thematic reports will be updated individually and not every report will be updated every month.

The most recent updates for this theme are shown in Table 1. Please note that recent updates to the Life expectancy section have been partial updates: (i) in June 2023, only Potential years of life lost (PYLL) was updated and (ii) in October 2023 suicides was added as a new subsection and the section was renamed as Life expectancy and mortality. We no longer have access to updated data for the Infant mortality section. In due course this will be removed from the live version of the publication but the data will remain in a static state in the [Health and Wellbeing data tables](#).

In March 2024 the existing General Practice content was refreshed.

Table 1: Update monitor for Health and Wellbeing subsections

where “✓” indicates the topic has been updated, “✗” indicates the topic has not been updated, and “New” indicates a new topic with analysis not previously included within the Digest.

Section	June 2023	October 2023	December 2023	March 2024
Life expectancy and mortality	✓	New	✗	✗
Wellbeing	✓	✗	✗	✗
NHS Dentistry provision	✗	New	✗	✗
General Practices	✗	New	✗	✓
Childcare provision	✗	✗	New	✗
Loneliness	✗	✓	✗	✗
Volunteering and charity	✗	✓	✗	✗

Official Statistics

These statistics have been produced to the high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, which sets out eight principles including meeting user needs, impartiality and objectivity, integrity, sound methods and assured quality, frankness and accessibility.

More information on the Official Statistics Code of Practice can be found at: [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

This publication has been compiled by the Rural Statistics Team within the Rural and Place Team in Defra:

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There is a 2011 Census version of the Digest which looks at the data from the 2011 census and where possible makes comparisons to the 2001 census results.

This can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/2011-census-results-for-rural-england>

Analysis of the 2021 Census will follow the release of a 2021-based rural urban classification.

Health and Wellbeing

This part of the Statistical Digest of Rural England focuses on Health and Wellbeing, and covers the following:

- life expectancy and mortality (Section A)
- personal wellbeing (Section B)
- NHS Dentistry provision (Section C)
- General Practices (Section D)
- childcare provision (Section E)
- loneliness (Section F)
- volunteering and charity (Section G)

The key findings from this report are summarised with the following set of headline clouds.

Life expectancy and Mortality – key findings

On average girls born in rural areas have a higher life expectancy than girls born in Urban areas

Of boys born in Rural areas, average life expectancy is highest in Rutland (83 years)

Children born in County Durham have the lowest average life expectancy, at 78 years for boys and 81 years for girls

Of girls born in Rural areas, average life expectancy is highest in South Cambridgeshire (86 years)

Registered suicide rates are slightly higher in Rural areas than Urban areas

Wellbeing – key findings

On average people living in Rural areas rated their satisfaction with life in 2021/22 as 7.7 out of 10

On average people living in Urban areas rated their satisfaction with life in 2021/22 as 7.5 out of 10

On average people living in Rural areas rated their happiness in 2021/22 as 7.6 out of 10

On average people living in Urban areas rated their happiness in 2021/22 as 7.4 out of 10

NHS Dentistry provision – key findings

There are 4,500 Rural NHS dentists – just under 1 in 4 of the NHS dentists in England

4 in 10 adults living in Rural areas had seen an NHS dentist between July '21 and June '23

Half of the children living in Rural areas had seen an NHS dentist between July '22 and June '23

General Practices – key findings

There are around 7,000 Rural NHS General Practitioners

There were 7% more Rural NHS practitioners in 2023 than in 2019

Rural practitioners account for 3 in every 20 GPs in England

There are most full-time equivalent GPs per patient in the Wirral sub-ICB

There are fewest full-time equivalent GPs per patient in the Portsmouth sub-ICBs.

Childcare headline cloud

Around 1 in 6 Rural childcare providers were rated outstanding.

Of the 13 thousand Rural childcare providers, 6,100 are childminders and 5,300 are nurseries/pre-schools

Between March 2020 and March 2022, the number of Rural childcare providers fell by 10% but the number of childcare places only fell by 1.5%

There are around 250 thousand childcare spaces in Rural areas

Childcare in London is more than £2 per hour more expensive than in Rural areas (or Urban areas outside of London).

Loneliness – key findings

1 in 5 people living in Rural areas reported never feeling lonely compared 1 in 4 people living in Urban areas

People living in Rural areas were more lonely in 2020/21 than they were in any other year between 2017/18 and 2021/22

More than 7 in every 10 rural people meet with friends or family on a weekly basis

Volunteering and charity – key findings

3 in every 5 people said they had volunteered in the last year in Rural areas; for Urban areas, it is closer to 1 in every 2

2 in every 5 people said they had volunteered in the last month in Rural areas; for Urban areas, it is closer to 1 in every 3

7 in every 10 people said they had recently donated to charity in Rural areas – slightly more than in Urban areas

Fewer people said they had volunteered or donated to charity in 2021/22 than in 2013/14

A. Life expectancy and Mortality

On average, a child born now in a Predominantly Rural area can expect to live longer than a child born in a Predominantly Urban area. Fewer potential years of life are lost due to illnesses in Predominantly Rural areas. However, the registered suicide rate is higher in Predominantly Rural areas.

Summary

Life expectancy is the average time that a person is expected to live from their birth. Potential years of life lost is the difference between actual age of death due to a condition/disease and expected age of death if they had not suffered from said circumstances. Infant mortality rate denotes infant deaths per 1,000 live births. Registered suicide rate shows deaths by injury or poisoning of undetermined intent, or by intentional self-harm. Understanding the trends for these indicators between Rural and Urban areas provides a useful representation of the overall health of these communities. These outcomes are all affected by a range of factors that differ between Rural and Urban areas, including socio-economic factors; rurality itself will not be necessarily the primary factor.

On average girls born in Predominantly Rural areas in 2018-20 can expect to live for 83.9 years; this is 1.2 years longer than girls born over the same period in Predominantly Urban areas. Boys born in Predominantly Rural areas in 2018-20 can expect to live for 82.7 years; this is 1.6 years longer than boys born over the same period in Predominantly Urban areas. In 2018-20 the average England life expectancy at birth for boys was 79.3 years and 83.1 years for girls.

In Predominantly Rural areas, there were 380 potential years of life lost per 10,000 population due to a condition/disease between 2018 and 2020; this compares to 460 potential years of life lost per 10,000 population in Predominantly Urban areas. Across all areas in England, there were more potential years of life lost for males than females between 2018 and 2020.

The infant mortality rate was lower in Rural areas than in Urban areas in 2018, corresponding to 3 deaths per 1,000 live births and 4 deaths per 1,000 live births respectively. Between 2012 and 2018, the infant mortality rate decreased by 0.5 deaths per 1,000 live births for Rural areas and by 0.2 deaths per 1,000 live births for Urban areas.

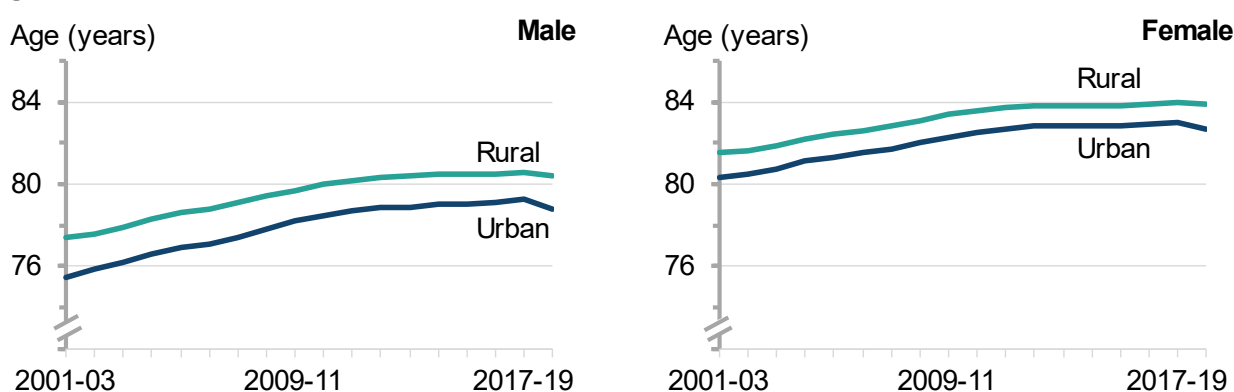
In 2021, the registered suicide rate in Predominantly Rural areas was 1.8 deaths higher per 100,000 population aged 10 and above than in Predominantly Urban areas (11.7 and 9.9 deaths per 100,000 population respectively). Between 2011 and 2021, the registered suicide rate was consistently higher in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas, except for in 2015 (where it was marginally higher in Urban areas).

Male and Female life expectancy

Life expectancy is the statistical measure of the average time that a person is expected to live from their birth. Many factors can affect life expectancy. Over the last 40 years life expectancy in England has been increasing and over this period women have had a longer life expectancy than men (Note A-7).

Figure A-1 shows that life expectancy has been increasing for both males (left-hand chart) and females (right-hand chart) over the period 2001-03 to 2016-18. But it has started to show a slight decrease in 2018-20; this decline spans a time period affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. For both sexes, life expectancy was higher for people born in Predominantly Rural areas compared with Predominantly Urban areas and the difference between these Rural and Urban life expectancy figures was greater for males than females.

Figure A-1: Life expectancy at birth, by the Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England (2001-03 to 2018-20). Males are shown on the left-hand chart and females on the right-hand chart.



In 2018-20 the average England life expectancy at birth for men was 79.3 years and 83.1 years for women (Table A-1). This means that a new-born boy in England can on average, expect to live to 79.3 years of age, if mortality rates stay the same throughout his lifetime. Likewise, for a new-born girl, they can on average expect to live to 83.1 years of age.

The highest life expectancy was recorded in Mainly Rural areas, with male life expectancy at 80.6 years and female life expectancy at 84.2 years. Life expectancy was lowest for both males and females in Urban with Minor Conurbations (Note A-1).

Table A-1 shows that on average females born in Predominantly Rural areas in 2018-20 can expect to live 1.2 years longer than females born over the same period in Predominantly Urban areas. Males born in Predominantly Rural areas in 2018-20 can expect to live 1.6 years longer than males born over the same period in Predominantly Urban areas.

A range of factors will affect life expectancy that differ between Rural and Urban areas, including socio-economic factors.

Table A-1: Life expectancy at birth, by the Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England (2018-20)

	Males	Females
Predominantly Rural	80.4	83.9
Predominantly Urban	78.8	82.7
England	79.3	83.1

Potential years of life lost (PYLL)

Potential years of life lost (PYLL) is the difference between the actual age of death due to a particular condition or disease, for all causes of death, and the expected age of death if that person had not suffered from that disease. Figure A-2 shows that the rate of PYLL is higher in Urban areas than Rural areas. Table A-2 shows that the highest rate of PYLL was in Urban with Minor Conurbation areas at 500 years of life lost per 10,000 population. The lowest PYLL rate was in Mainly Rural areas, at 370 years of life lost per 10,000 population.

Figure A-2: Years of life lost due to mortality from all causes, by detailed Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2018-20 (Note A-5, Note A-6)



Table A-2: Potential years of life lost per 10,000 population for all causes, by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2018-20 (Note A-5, Note A-6)

Detailed Rural-Urban Classification	PYLL – All Causes	Broad Rural-Urban Classification	PYLL – All Causes
Mainly Rural	370	Predominantly Rural	380
Largely Rural	380	Predominantly Urban	460
Urban with Significant Rural	400	England	440
Urban with City and Town	460		
Urban with Minor Conurbation	500		
Urban with Major Conurbation	460		

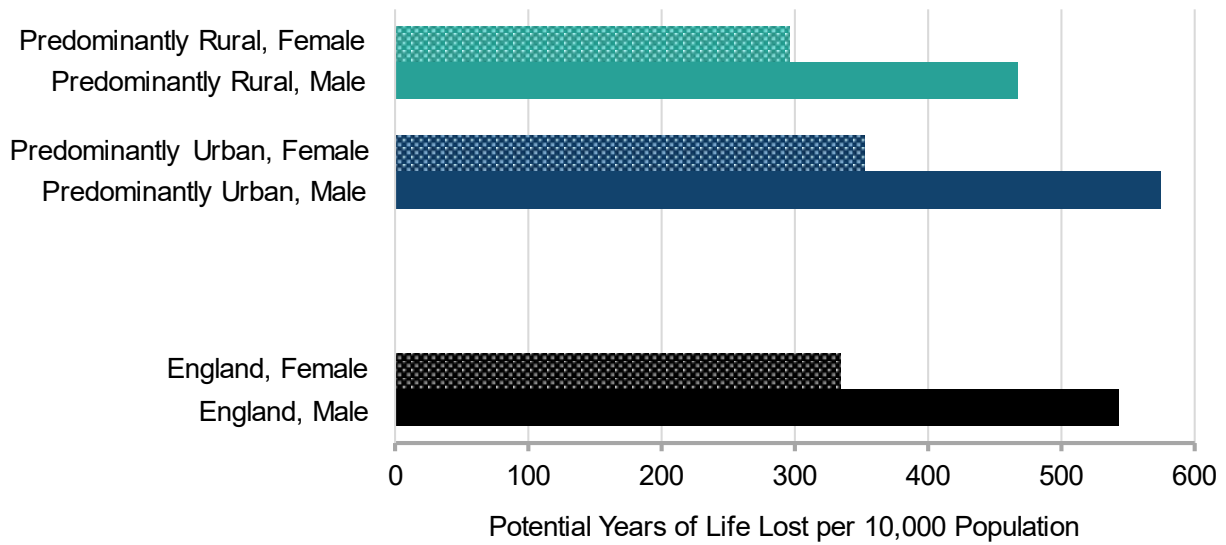
Given the greater life expectancy for females (Table A-1), one would expect the PYLL to be higher for males than females. Figure A-3 confirms that in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas the PYLL was greater for males than females over the 2018-20 period.

In Predominantly Rural areas, the PYLL for females was 300 years of life lost per 10,000 population, this compares to 350 years of life lost per 10,000 population for females in Predominantly Urban areas. In Predominantly Rural areas, the PYLL for males was 470 years of life lost per 10,000 population, this compares to 570 years of life lost per 10,000 population for males in Predominantly Urban areas.

In Predominantly Rural areas, the PYLL was an additional 170 years of life lost per 10,000 population for males relative to females. While in Predominantly Urban areas the PYLL was an additional 220 years of life lost per 10,000 population for males relative to females.

Figure A-3: Years of life lost due to mortality from all causes, by broad Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2018-20 (Note A-5, Note A-6)

Females are shown as stippled bars and males as solid bars.



Infant mortality rate (IMR)

The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is the number of infant (under one year old) deaths per 1,000 live births. There are many factors that can influence the IMR, including birth weight, mother’s age, and socio-economic status.

Figure A-4 shows that in 2018 the IMR was lower in Rural areas (3.0 deaths per 1,000 live births) than in Urban areas (4.1 deaths per 1,000 live births). In 2018 the England average IMR was 3.9 per 1,000 live births (Table A-3). Figure A-4 also shows that Rural areas in a sparse setting have a higher IMR (3.8 deaths per 1,000 live births) than Rural areas overall.

Table A-3 shows that between 2012 and 2018 the IMR decreased by 0.5 deaths per 1,000 live births for Rural areas and by 0.2 deaths per 1,000 live births for Urban areas.

Figure A-4: Infant mortality rate, by settlement type in England, 2018

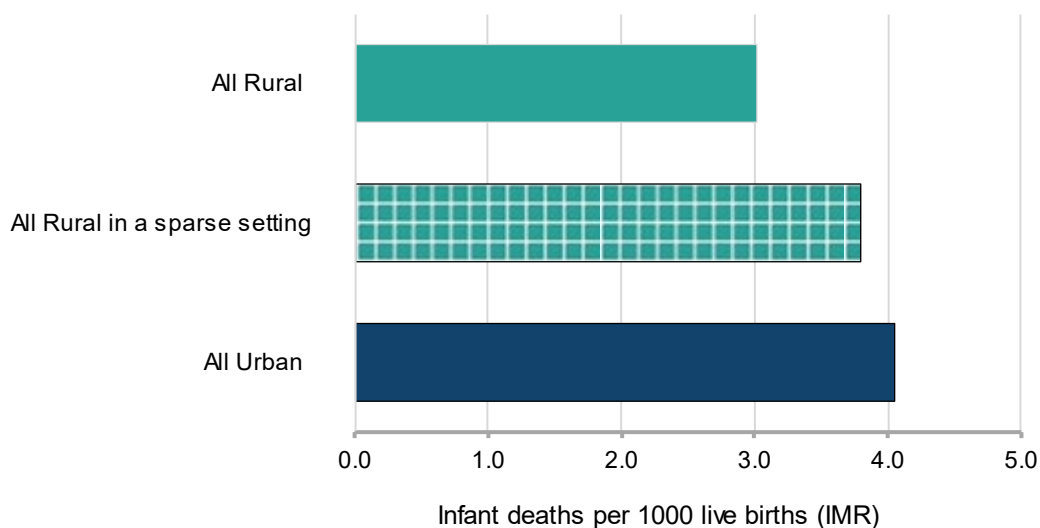


Table A-3: Infant deaths (aged under 1 year) per 1,000 live births, by settlement type in England, 2012 - 2018

	2012	2015	2018
All Urban	4.2	4.0	4.1
All Rural	3.6	3.1	3.0
All Rural in a sparse setting	3.5	2.6	3.8
Rural Town and fringe	3.9	3.2	3.4
Rural Village	3.2	3.1	2.4
Rural Hamlet and isolated dwellings	3.1	2.8	2.9
England	4.1	3.9	3.9

Suicide rate

In England and Wales, when somebody dies unexpectedly, a Coroner investigates the circumstances to establish the cause of death. The investigation, referred to as an 'inquest,' is a process that can take months, and in some cases, years. When an inquest has concluded, the death is officially registered. For suicides that occurred in England and Wales, the Office for National Statistics then assigns each death with an 'underlying cause', based on the information provided by the Coroner. Data on suicide concern all deaths that were assigned underlying cause of intentional self-harm (for those aged 10 years and above). Deaths caused by injury or poisoning of undetermined intent (for those aged 15 years and above) are also included, based on the assumption that the majority of these deaths will be suicide. This is referred to as the National Statistics definition of suicide. For more information, see the [Suicides in England and Wales: 2021 registrations](#) statistical bulletin.

Suicide rate in 2021

It is possible to compare the registered suicide rate between Rural and Urban areas in England. Table A-4 uses the number of deaths by suicide registered, as well as the population of people aged 10 and above; see Note A-9 for more information about the population base used. Data on registered suicides is based on the victim's usual residence, not where the death occurred.

Table A-4: Number of deaths by suicide registered per 100,000 population aged 10 and above, by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2021 (Note A-8, Note A-9)

	Population aged 10+	Number of deaths by suicide registered	Suicides per 100,000 population aged 10+
Predominantly Rural	10,592,050	1,240	11.7
Urban with Significant Rural	7,076,210	750	10.7
Predominantly Urban	32,469,680	3,220	9.9
England	50,137,940	5,220	10.4

In 2021, the registered suicide rate in Predominantly Rural areas was 1.8 deaths higher per 100,000 population aged 10 and above than in Predominantly Urban areas (11.7 and 9.9 deaths per 100,000 population respectively).

Notes

- The populations and number of deaths registered in Table A-4 have been rounded to the nearest 10 and therefore totals might not equal the sum of the component parts.

Long-term suicide rate trends

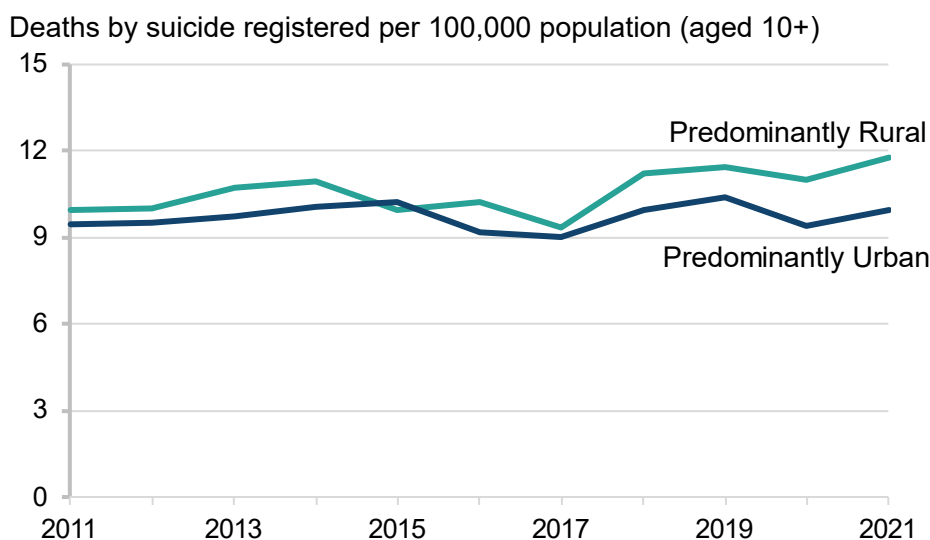
Figure A-5 shows the registered suicide rate for people aged 10 and above (Note A-9) by broad Rural-Urban Classification between 2011 and 2021.

In 2011 there was little difference in the registered suicide rate between Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas (9.9 and 9.4 deaths per 100,000 population respectively). Whilst there has been fluctuation in the registered suicide between 2011 and 2021, there was an overall increase of 1.8 deaths per 100,000 population aged 10 and above in Predominantly Rural areas, compared with an increase of 0.5 deaths per 100,000 population aged 10 and above in Predominantly Urban areas.

In Predominantly Rural areas, the registered suicide rate was highest in 2021 (11.7 deaths per 100,000 population aged 10 and above; however, in Predominantly Urban areas the registered suicide rate was highest in 2019 (10.4 deaths per 100,000 population aged 10 and above).

The registered suicide rate was lowest in 2017 in both Predominantly Rural (9.4 deaths per 100,000 population aged 10 and above) and Predominantly Urban areas (9.0 deaths per 100,000 population aged 10 and above). Between 2017 and 2021, the registered suicide rate increased by 2.4 deaths per 100,000 population (aged 10 and above) in Predominantly Rural areas, and by 0.9 deaths per 100,000 population (aged 10 and above) in Predominantly Urban areas.

Figure A-5: Number of deaths by suicide registered per 100,000 population aged 10 and above, by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2011 to 2021 (Note A-8)



Life expectancy and Mortality explanatory notes

Note A-1

Tables showing male and female life expectancy, broken down by the Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification for 2001-03 to 2018-20 are available in the [Health and Wellbeing data tables](#).

- **Note A-2**

For the life expectancy analysis, the weighted average is calculated using NOMIS mid-year population estimates by Local Authority and using RUC 2011. 2018-20 population data uses the new unitary authority boundaries created in 2020.

- **Note A-3**

Restructuring of local governments in England changed the local authority boundaries and areas.

1. Buckinghamshire UA comprises part of the Buckinghamshire county (Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks, Wycombe)
2. North Northamptonshire UA comprises part of the Northamptonshire county (Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering, Wellingborough)
3. West Northamptonshire UA comprises part of the Northamptonshire county (Daventry, Northampton, South Northamptonshire)

- **Note A-4**

Data source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) Life expectancy tables:

[Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) Life expectancy tables](#)

- **Note A-5**

Potential years of life lost (PYLL) measures the average number of years a person would have lived had they not died prematurely (age 1 to 74), per 10,000 population. Data are based on the original underlying cause of death measured by directly age-standardised rates. Data for 2018-2020 are pooled and weighted by the 2019 NOMIS population estimates of Local Authorities. All figures quoted in the PYLL section have been rounded to the nearest 10 years.

- **Note A-6**

PYLL comes from the Compendium of population health indicators. Specifically it uses “Years of life lost due to mortality from all causes (ICD-10 A00 - Y99)” which is available at: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/compendium-mortality/current/years-of-life-lost/years-of-life-lost-due-to-mortality-from-all-causes-crude-rate-1-74-years-3-year-average-mfp>.

- **Note A-7**

National life tables – life expectancy in the UK: 2018 to 2020:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies/bulletins/nationallifetablesunitedkingdom/2018to2020>

- **Note A-8**

Data on registered suicides is based on the victim’s usual residence as provided by the informant upon registration - not where the suicide occurred. Data by Rural-Urban Classification excludes non-residents as is calculated from individual Local Authority data. Years given are based on the date of registration, as opposed to the date the death occurred.

- **Note A-9**

The National Statistics definition of suicide includes intentional self-harm in persons aged 10 years and above, and injury/poisoning of undetermined intent in persons aged 15 years and above. In lieu of an age-standardised rate, Defra analysis uses mid-year population estimates of all persons aged 10 and above in order to produce registered suicide rates for standalone years.

B. Wellbeing

Over the last decade, the averages scores for wellbeing given by people living in Rural areas has tended to be higher than the average scores given by people living in Urban Areas.

Summary

Wellbeing as a measurable concept has become more recognised in recent years. This section explores wellbeing via a selection of now well-established measures – scores for life satisfaction, feeling what one does is worthwhile, happiness and anxiety.

In 2021/22 those living in Rural areas on average score themselves marginally better than those living in Urban areas on all 4 of wellbeing measures considered in the ONS personal wellbeing estimates. All of the wellbeing estimates show marginally more positive scores in 2021/22 than they did in 2020/21. However, these scores potentially show a reduction in wellbeing between 2018/19 and 2021/22 with a higher average score for anxiety and lower average scores for life satisfaction, sense of worthwhile, and happiness. This could be reflecting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on wellbeing.

Latest estimates of Wellbeing

The ONS produce personal wellbeing estimates on an annual basis (Note B-5). Figure B-1 shows that in 2021/22 on average people living in Predominantly Rural areas rated their wellbeing as slightly better than those in Predominantly Urban areas, although the differences are small. Individuals were asked to rate on a scale from 0 to 10 their life satisfaction, how happy and how anxious they were yesterday (in respect of being anxious, a lower score indicates a more positive response) and how worthwhile the things they do are. It should be noted that the populations in Rural and Urban areas differ across a range of socio-economic measures. Such differences are likely to affect reported measures of wellbeing, so comparisons should be made with caution.

Figure B-1: Average ratings (out of ten) on four measures of wellbeing, by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification in England, 2021/22 (Note B-4, Note B-5)

In respect of being anxious, a lower score indicates a more positive response. The legend is presented in the same order as the clusters of columns.

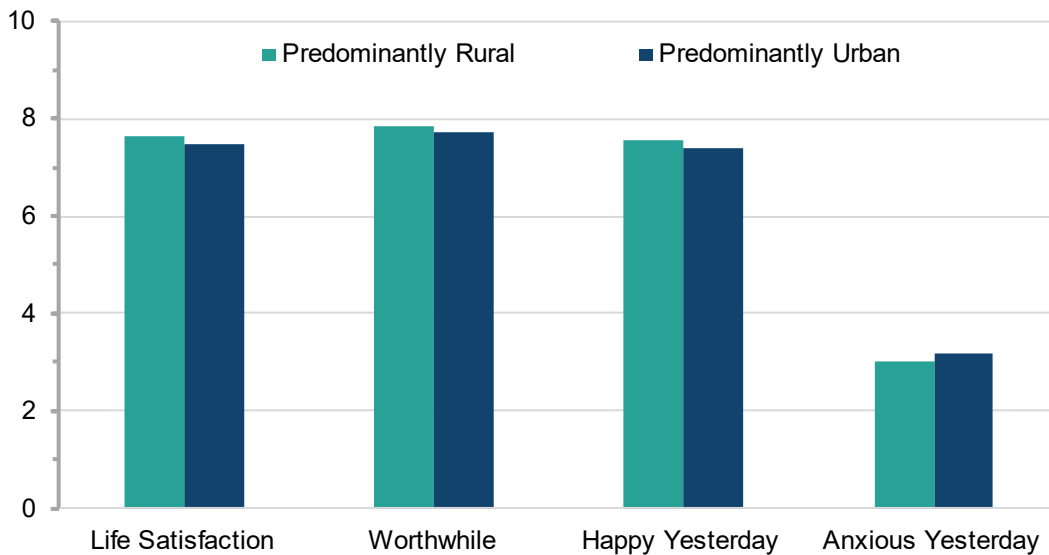


Table B-1 summarises the 2021/22 wellbeing results. When wellbeing for those living in Predominantly Rural areas is compared to those living in Predominantly Urban areas, we see the following:

- 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 7.7 compared with an average rating of 7.5 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 7.9 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 7.6 compared with an average rating of 7.4 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 3.0 compared with an average rating of 3.2 given by those living in Predominantly Urban areas (a lower score indicates a more positive response).

Table B-1: Average ratings (out of ten) on four measures of wellbeing, by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification in England, 2021/22 (Note B-3, Note B-4, Note B-5)

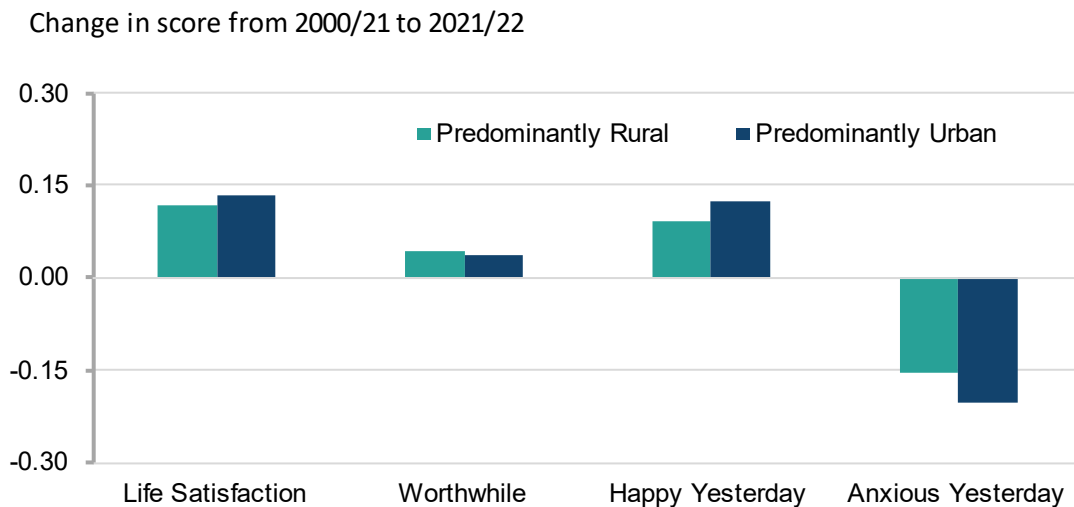
	Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?	Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?	Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?	Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?
Predominantly Rural	7.7	7.9	7.6	3.0
Urban with Significant Rural	7.6	7.8	7.5	3.0
Predominantly Urban	7.5	7.7	7.4	3.2
England	7.5	7.8	7.4	3.1

Figure B-2 displays the change in the value of each of the 4 measures of wellbeing between 2020/21 and 2021/22. Figure B-2 can be summarised with the following bullets.

- In both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas the average scores for life satisfaction and slightly happiness were marginally higher in 2021/22 than they were in 2020/21.
- In both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban there was little change average scores for feeling life is worthwhile their life between 2021/22 and 2020/21.
- In both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas the average scores for anxiety were slightly lower in 2021/22 than in 2020/21.

Figure B-2: The change in the score of 4 measures of wellbeing between 2020/21 and 2021/22 by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification in England (Note B-5)

The legend is presented in the same order as the clusters of columns.



Notes

- In Table B-5. and Figure B-1, for the anxiousness question a lower score represents a more favourable outcome. For the other 3 questions a higher score represents the more favourable outcome.
- Data are for April 2021 to March 2022.

The differences in wellbeing ratings between Rural and Urban areas are small over the period 2011/12 to 2020/22 (Table B-2, Table B-3, Table B-4 and Table B-5). However average wellbeing scores in Rural areas have been better than the average in Urban areas across all four measures. Comparing the wellbeing estimates for 2018/19 (pre COVID-19 outbreak) with 2020/21 (post COVID-19 outbreak) average scores for anxiety have gone up while those for life satisfaction, sense of things being worthwhile, and happiness have gone down. Whilst all 4 metrics indicated marginal improvements in wellbeing between 2020/21 and 2021/22, all 4 metrics still record marginally lower average scores than they did immediately prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table B-2: 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 to 2021/22 (Note B-5)

Satisfaction	2011 /12	2012 /13	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22
Predominantly Rural	7.6	7.6	7.7	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.5	7.7
Predominantly Urban	7.3	7.4	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.3	7.5
England	7.4	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.6	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.4	7.5

Table B-3: 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 to 2021/22 (Note B-5)

Worthwhile	2011 /12	2012 /13	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22
Predominantly Rural	7.8	7.8	7.9	7.9	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	7.8	7.9
Predominantly Urban	7.6	7.6	7.7	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.7	7.7
England	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.8	7.8	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.7	7.8

Table B-4: 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 to 2021/22 (Note B-5)

Happiness	2011 /12	2012 /13	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22
Predominantly Rural	7.4	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.7	7.6	7.5	7.6
Predominantly Urban	7.2	7.2	7.3	7.4	7.4	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.4	7.3	7.4
England	7.3	7.3	7.4	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.6	7.5	7.3	7.4

Table B-5: 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 to 2021/22 (Note B-4, Note B-5)

Anxiety	2011 /12	2012 /13	2013 /14	2014 /15	2015 /16	2016 /17	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22
Predominantly Rural	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	3.0	3.2	3.0
Predominantly Urban	3.2	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.1	3.4	3.2
England	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.3	3.1

Wellbeing explanatory notes

- **Note B-1**

Current data source: [ONS Annual personal well-being estimates](#)

- **Note B-2**

The personal well-being statistics are produced from the Annual Population Survey (APS). These statistics were designated as National Statistics from the April 2013 to March 2014 dataset onwards (April 2014); before this, they were designated as experimental.

- **Note B-3**

Tables showing the 2021/22 wellbeing estimates by Local Authority and by detailed Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification are available in the [Health and Wellbeing data tables](#).

- **Note B-4**

For the question “Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?” lower score indicate a more positive outcome in Table B-5 and Figure B-1.

- **Note B-5**

The ONS produce personal wellbeing estimates on an annual basis according to 1 April to 31 March financial years.

C. NHS Dentistry provision

On average populations relative to NHS dentist numbers are higher in Predominantly Rural areas compared with Predominantly Urban areas and the proportion of people recently visiting a dentist is lower in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas.

Summary

Dentists can be either private practitioners, NHS practitioners or a mixture of the two. We analyse the number of NHS dentists per population can allow some rural and urban comparisons on the provision of NHS dentistry.

In 2022/23 there was just over 24,000 dentists in England. There were 50 dentists per 100,000 population in Predominantly Rural areas compared with 59 dentists in Predominantly Urban areas. This equates to one NHS dentist for every 2,000 people in Predominantly Rural areas. In the two years up to 30 June 2023, 38% of adults living in Predominantly Rural areas had seen an NHS dentist compared to 45% of adults in Predominantly Urban areas.

In Predominantly Rural areas 8% of dentists who did some NHS work in 2021/22 did not do so in 2022/23 (a slightly higher percentage than in Predominantly Urban areas). In 2022/23, 6% of dentists who did some NHS work had not done so in the previous year, this value is similar in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas. Each year dentists start and stop dentistry as an NHS practitioner for a variety of reasons.

People may visit a dentist where they live, while others may visit a dentist near their place of work. It is therefore difficult to directly relate the availability of dentists to population.

Availability of dental care

In 2022/23 there was just over 24,000 dentists in England (Note C-1). Dentists can, and indeed do, operate in more than one geographical area so the number of dentists in Predominantly Rural (4,500) and Predominantly Urban (20,500) areas sums to more than the overall total in England.

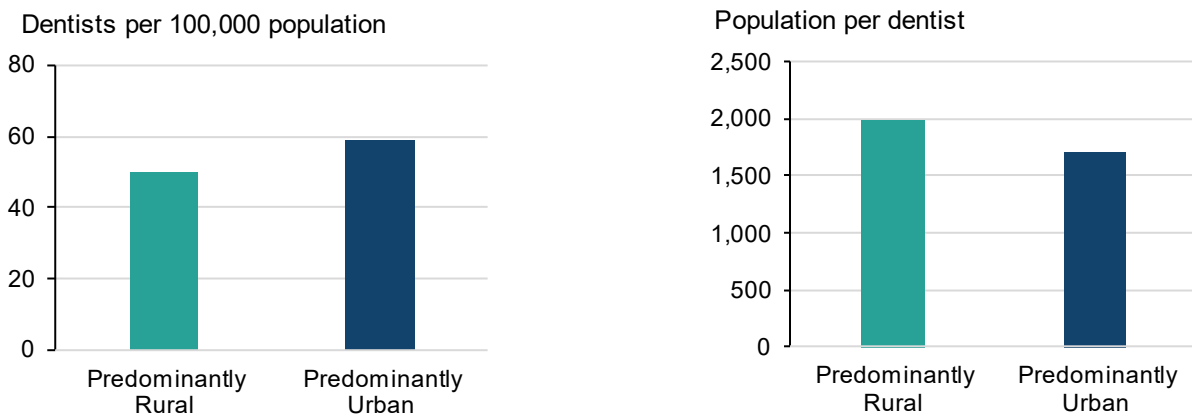
In 2022/23 there were 50 dentists per 100,000 population in Predominantly Rural areas compared with 59 dentists in Predominantly Urban areas (Figure F-1 – left-hand chart). The right-hand chart of Figure F-1 shows that there were just under 2,000 people per dentist in Predominantly Rural areas compared with 1,700 in Predominantly Urban areas. These numbers are based on the number of people living in the area and the number dentists offering NHS (National Health Service) treatment, but of course for some it will be more convenient to attend a dentist where they work and these people might not live and work within areas holding the same Rural-Urban Classification category.

Table C-1: NHS dentists in 2022/23 by broad Rural-Urban Classification for sub-Integrated Care Boards (Note C-1, Note C-2)

Total number of dentists	
Predominantly Rural	4,460
Urban with Significant Rural	6,410
Predominantly Urban	20,450
England	24,150

Figure C-1: NHS dentists in 2022/23 by broad Rural-Urban Classification for sub-Integrated Care Boards (Note C-2)

The left-hand chart shows the number of dentists per 100,000 population and the right-hand chart shows the population per dentist.



Whilst the average number of dentists per 100,000 population in Predominantly Rural areas was 50, in 2022/23 there were some Predominantly Rural areas with fewer dentists per 100,000 population. Overall, there was 6 Predominantly Rural sub-Integrated Care Boards with fewer than 45 dentists per 100,000 population in 2022/23 (Table C-2). No Predominantly Urban sub-Integrated Care Boards had fewer than 45 dentists per 100,000 population. The lowest numbers of dentists per population were within one of the Humber and North Yorkshire sub-Integrated Care Boards where there are almost 3,000 people living in the area per dentist. This is more than three

times as many people per dentist than the area with the most dentists per 100,000 population (NHS Greater Manchester ICB - 02A – 117 dentists per 100,000 people).

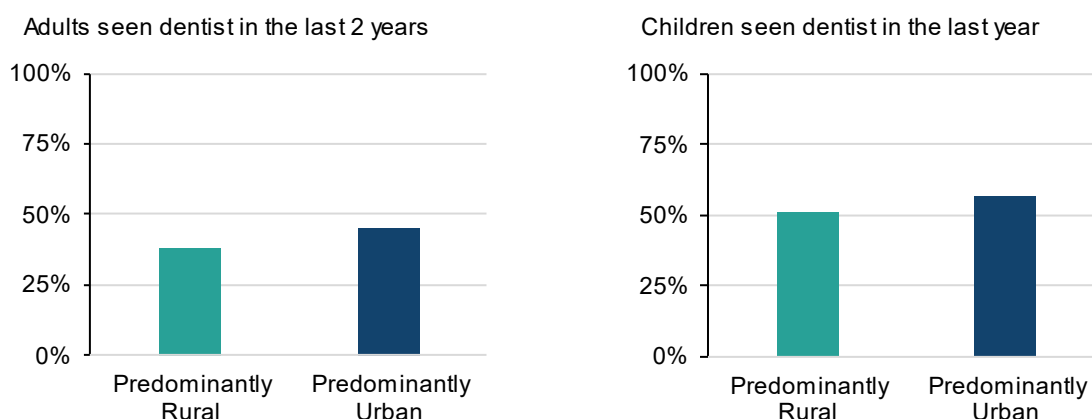
Table C-2: Predominantly Rural sub-Integrated Care Boards with fewer than 45 dentists per 100,000 population

Sub-Integrated Care Board	Total number of dentists	Population per dentist	Dentists per 100,000 population
NHS Humber and North Yorkshire ICB – 02Y	109	2,930	34
NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB – 26A	372	2,780	36
NHS Lincolnshire ICB – 71E	292	2,620	38
NHS Suffolk and North East Essex ICB - 06L	167	2,470	41
NHS Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly ICB – 11N	246	2,340	43
NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICB – 06H	399	2,250	44

In the two years up to 30 June 2023, 38% of adults living in Predominantly Rural areas had seen an NHS dentist (Figure C-2 left-hand chart). This is a smaller proportion than in Predominantly Urban areas where 45% of adults had seen a dentist in the last 2 years. In the year to 30 June 2023, 51% of children living in Predominantly Rural areas had seen an NHS dentist compared with 57% of children living within Predominantly Urban areas (Figure C-2 right-hand chart). These numbers are based on people attending a dentist (Note C-6) and the resident population, but of course for some it will be more convenient to attend a dentist where they work or go to school in the case of children, so this is not a true proportion of the resident population having treatment.

Figure C-2: The proportion of people who have seen an NHS dentist in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas as at 30 June 2023 (Note C-6)

The left-hand chart shows the proportion of adults visiting a dentist in the last 2 years and the right-hand chart shows the proportion of children who have seen a dentist in the last year.



In the two years up to 30 June 2023, there were 4 Local authorities where fewer than 20% of adults had seen an NHS dentist in this period (Table C-3). Of these 4 Local Authorities, 3 were Predominantly Rural and one was Predominantly Urban. North Kesteven, in Lincolnshire, had the lowest proportion of adults who had seen an NHS dentist in the 2 years to 30 June 2023.

Table C-3: Local authorities where fewer than 20% of adult residents saw an NHS dentist in the 2 years to 30 June 2023

Local Authority	Rural-Urban Classification	Proportion of adults seen in the last 24 months (%)
North Kesteven	PR	12
Melton	PR	15
City of London	PU	16
Tewkesbury	PR	17

Notes

- Total number of dentists in Table C-1 has been rounded to the nearest 10.
- No Predominantly Urban area had fewer than 45 dentists per 100,000 population.

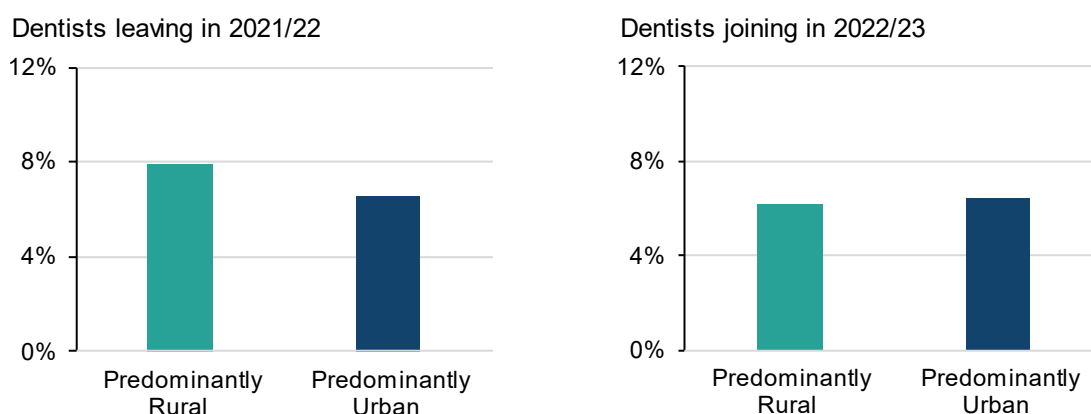
Dentists leaving and joining NHS dentistry

Each year dentists start and stop dentistry as an NHS practitioner for a variety of reasons. For our purposes, a leaver is defined as a dentist who has done some NHS dental work in the specified year but does none in the following year. A joiner is defined as a dentist who has done some NHS dental work in the specified year but none in the previous year.

In Predominantly Rural areas 8% of dentists who did some NHS work in 2021/22 did not do so in 2022/23 and hence are regarded as ‘leavers’, a slightly higher percentage than in Predominantly Urban areas (Figure C-3 – right hand chart). In 2022/23, 6% of dentists who did some NHS work had not done so in the previous year and hence are regarded as ‘joiners’, a similar proportion to Predominantly Urban areas (Figure C-3 – right hand chart). Given the methodology used it not possible to determine if these dentists joining the NHS were new dentists to the NHS or ones that had done NHS work prior to 2021/22, for example a dentist who took maternity leave or one who had a period in private practice.

Figure C-3: Percentage of Dentists leaving and joining NHS dentistry in Rural and Urban areas of England (Note C-5)

The left-hand chart shows the proportion of dentists leaving in 2021/22 and the right-hand chart shows the proportion of dentists joining in 2022/23.



NHS Dentistry provision explanatory notes

- **Note C-1**

Dentists are defined as performers with NHS activity recorded in 2022/23. Dentists can, and indeed do, operate in more than one geographical area. The England total excludes dentists counted more than once. Hence the population per dentist is higher and the dentists per population lower for England overall compared with the sub-national figures.
- **Note C-2**

Sub-Integrated Care Boards are transitional and correspond with the former Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). There are 106 in England, and these have been classified using the Rural-Urban Classification methodology for higher geographies. The names refer to the ICB whereas the numbers refer to the sub-ICB.
- **Note C-3**

The 10 sub-Integrated Care Boards with the lowest numbers of dentists per population were found in Predominantly Rural (PR) areas, and Urban with Significant Rural (USR) areas.
- **Note C-4**

Geographical data are for Local Authorities to which the Rural-Urban Classification has been applied. Patients might not attend a dentist in the area in which they live.
- **Note C-5**

Source: Defra analysis of [NHS Dental Statistics for England, 2022-23, Annual Report - NHS Digital](#)
- **Note C-6**

Patients seen also includes orthodontist visits; it is not possible to separately determine which patients were seen for orthodontic visits.

D. General Practices

The ratio of General Practitioner total FTE to patients is slightly higher in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas.

Summary

The network of NHS General Practices provides an essential first point of access to health care for Rural communities.

In March 2023, there were 7,400 GPs in Predominantly Rural areas – 1,190 of which were full-time, permanent, and fully-qualified. In Predominantly Urban areas, there were 29,000 GPs in March 2023 – 4,700 of which were full-time, permanent, and fully-qualified. There was the equivalent workforce of around 6.0 full-time GPs per 10,000 patients in Predominantly Rural areas in March 2023, based on the distribution of Full Time Equivalent to patients. In Predominantly Urban areas, this was slightly lower at around 5.6 equivalent full-time GPs per 10,000 patients.

Between March 2019 and March 2023, there was a net increase of 150 and 190 permanent GPs in roles in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas respectively.

Within these statistics, “permanent GPs” includes Salaried GPs and GP Partners, whereas “non-permanent GPs” includes Locum GPs, GPs in Training, and GP Retainers; this includes both full-time and part-time practitioners. These statistics relate only to GPs working for the NHS.

Number of NHS General Practitioners

Healthcare is an important service that needs to be delivered at local levels; it is therefore important that there is adequate provision in Rural areas. As one of the first points of access to health care, the network of General Practices provides an essential service for Rural communities. Please note: this analysis only focuses on those publicly available NHS practices, and therefore does not include private practices.

Table D-1 shows the total number of General Practitioners (GPs) in Predominantly Rural areas, as at 31st March of each year from 2019 to 2023. Permanent GPs includes Salaried GPs and GP Partners, whereas non-permanent GPs includes Locum GPs, GPs in Training, and GP Retainers (Note D-4, Note D-5); this includes both full-time and part-time practitioners.

In Predominantly Rural areas, there were 7,400 GPs in March 2023 – 5,840 of which were permanent, fully-qualified practitioners. In March 2023, there were 29,000 GPs in Predominantly Urban areas – 22,030 of which were permanent and fully-qualified (Table D-2).

There were more GPs in 2023 than in 2019 in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas. Between 2019 and 2023, the number of permanent, fully qualified GPs increased by 3% in Predominantly Rural areas and by 1% in Predominantly Urban areas. The number of GPs in Training, GP Retainers, and Locum GPs is more likely to vary than for permanent positions, and it increased by 25% in Predominantly Rural areas and 28% in Predominantly Urban areas.

16% of all permanent, fully qualified GPs practiced in surgeries in Predominantly Rural areas as of March 2023. Between 2019 and 2023, the proportional distribution of GPs between Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas was largely unchanged. In other words, there was little net migration from Predominantly Rural General Practices to those in Predominantly Urban areas, or vice versa.

Table D-1: Total number of General Practitioners (GPs) in roles, for Predominantly Rural areas in England, 31st March 2019 to 31st March 2023 (Note D-1, Note D-2)

GP role group	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Permanent GPs	5,680	5,570	5,760	5,840	5,840
Non-permanent GPs	1,250	1,250	1,380	1,480	1,560
All Predominantly Rural GPs	6,940	6,820	7,140	7,320	7,400

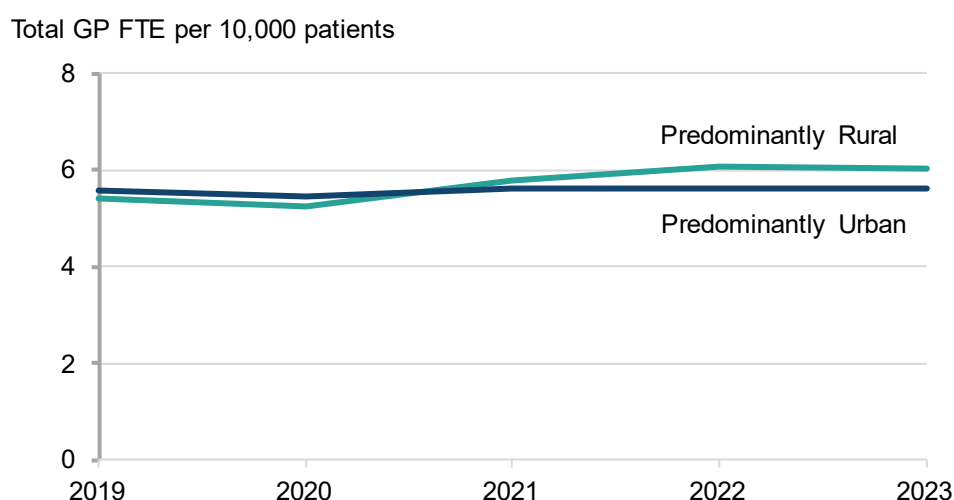
Table D-2: Total number of General Practitioners (GPs) in roles, for Predominantly Urban areas in England, 31st March 2019 to 31st March 2023 (Note D-1, Note D-2)

GP role group	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Permanent GPs	21,840	21,730	22,220	22,280	22,030
Non-permanent GPs	5,460	5,740	6,360	6,520	6,980
All Predominantly Urban GPs	27,290	27,470	28,580	28,800	29,000

Total Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) for NHS General Practitioners

In some cases, the role of a GP may be shared by multiple part-time people. In order to provide a more accurate depiction of the availability of GPs, it is possible to calculate the total full-time equivalent for GPs in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas (Figure D-1).

Figure D-1: Total Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) for General Practitioners (GPs) per 10,000 patients, by Rural-Urban Classification, 31st March 2019 to 31st March 2023 (Note D-2)



In 2019, there was the equivalent of around 5.5 GPs per 10,000 patients in Predominantly Rural areas. Over the period 2020 to 2022, this value rose to around 6 GPs per 10,000 patients where it has remained in 2023. Throughout the period 2019 to 2023 there was approximately 5.5 GPs per 10,000 patients in Predominantly Urban areas. In 2019 and 2020, there were slightly fewer equivalent full-time GPs in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas. However, between 2021 and 2023, there were slightly more equivalent full-time GPs in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas.

When evaluating specific sub-Integrated Care Boards, a particularly low FTE per 10,000 patients might indicate higher pressure on the practices (i.e., making it more difficult to get an appointment to be seen by a GP), whereas a particularly high FTE per 10,000 patients could indicate lesser pressure.

Table D-3 highlights the areas with the highest and lowest FTE per 10,000 patients by Rural-Urban Classification, as of March 2023. In Predominantly Rural areas, Northumberland (00L) had the equivalent of 7.2 full-time GPs per 10,000 patients, which was the most seen across all Rural area; however, this likely reflects the low population density in Northumberland. In Predominantly Urban areas, Wirral (12F) had the equivalent of 7.9 full-time GPs per 10,000 patients; this was the highest across all Urban areas, as well as the highest across England.

Ipswich and East Suffolk (06L) had lowest ratios of GPs per patients in Predominantly Rural areas, with the equivalent of 4.8 full-time GPs per 10,000 patients in 2023. In Predominantly Urban areas, Portsmouth (10R) had the lowest ratios in 2023, with the equivalent of 4.1 full-time GPs per 10,000 patients; this was also the lowest GP FTE to patient ratio seen in England.

Table D-3: Areas with the highest and lowest GP Full-time Equivalent (FTE) per 10,000 patients, by broad Rural-Urban Classification, 31st March 2023 (Note D-2)

Rural-Urban Classification	Highest FTE per 10,000 patients		Lowest FTE per 10,000 patients	
	Sub-ICB name	Rate	Sub-ICB name	Rate
Predominantly Rural	Northumberland (00L)	7.2	Ipswich and East Suffolk (06L)	4.8
Urban with Significant Rural	North Staffordshire (05G)	7.3	Kent and Medway (91Q)	4.6
Predominantly Urban	Wirral (12F)	7.9	Portsmouth (10R)	4.1

NHS General Practitioners (GPs): Leavers and Joiners

In addition to analysing the total number of GPs, we can review the number of GPs leaving or joining roles per year – much of this will be arising from GPs changing roles. Figure D-2 shows the change in permanent GPs (i.e., Salaried GPs and GP Partners) in Predominantly Rural areas and Figure D-3 shows the change in the number of full-time permanent GPs in Predominantly Urban areas between 2019/20 and 2022/23.

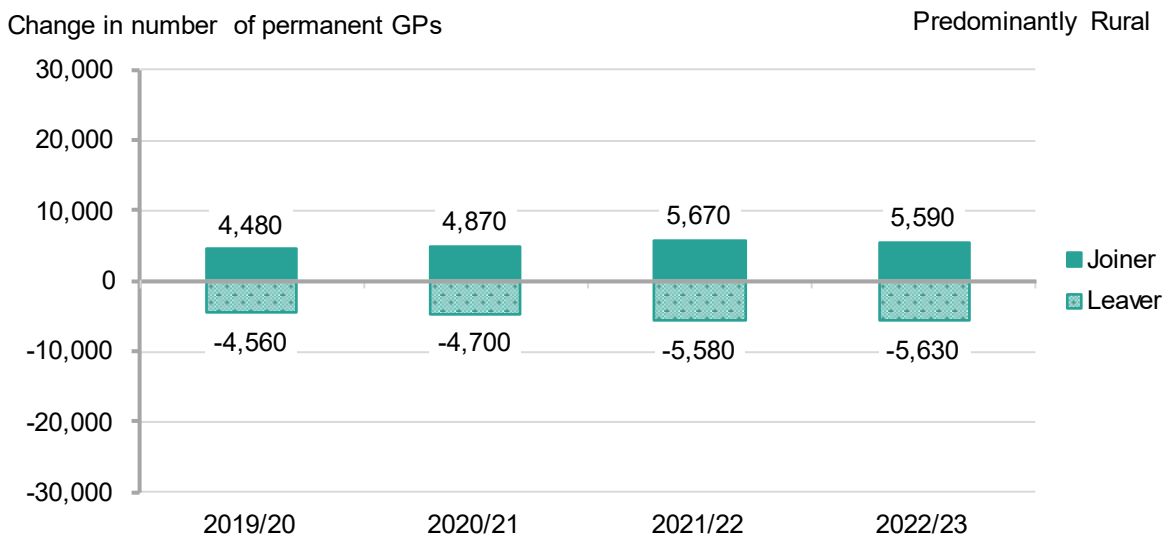
There were only 15 permanent GPs who remained in the same post between 2019/20 and 2022/23 in Predominantly Rural areas, and only 89 who remained in the same post in Predominantly Urban areas; this is around 0.3% and 0.4% of the total number of permanent GPs in Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas in 2023, respectively.

Between March 2019 and March 2023, 20,470 permanent GPs left their roles in Predominantly Rural areas, and there were 20,610 permanent GPs joining roles; this includes those who transferred to or from Predominantly Urban areas. The greatest difference in workforce was in 2021/22, where 5,670 GPs joined permanent roles and 5,580 GPs left permanent roles in Predominantly Rural areas.

The net change decreased each year between 2019/20 and 2022/23, with the smallest difference being 1,180 GPs joining and 1,240 GPs leaving permanent roles in Predominantly Rural areas in 2022/23. There was a net increase of 150 permanent GPs in roles in Predominantly Rural areas between 2019 and 2023.

Figure D-2: Change in number of permanent General Practitioners (GPs) in roles in Predominantly Rural areas, by numbers of those who left/joined a role, England, 2019/20 to 2022/23 (Note D-1, Note D-2)

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacked columns. GPs who joined a permanent role are represented with solid bars, whilst those who left a permanent role are represented with dotted bars.

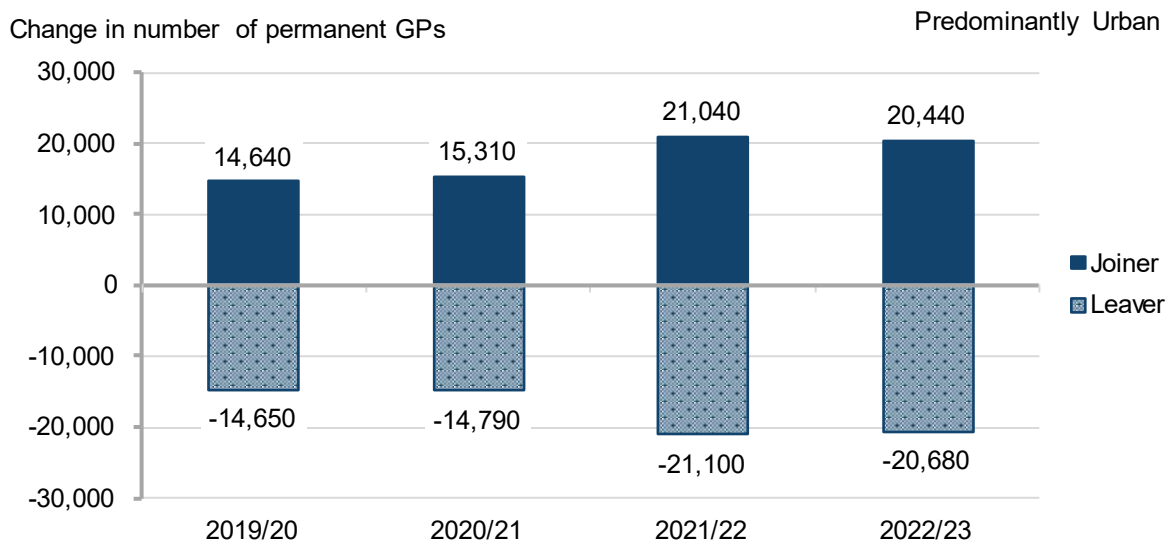


In Predominantly Urban areas, there were 71,230 permanent GPs who left their role between March 2019 and March 2023. There were 71,420 new permanent GPs in roles in Predominantly Urban areas, including those who transferred from Predominantly Rural areas. This means that there was a net increase of 190 permanent GPs in roles in Predominantly Urban areas between

2019 and 2023. The greatest difference was in 2021/22, with 21,040 GPs joining and 21,100 GPs leaving permanent roles in Predominantly Urban areas.

Figure D-3: Change in number of permanent General Practitioners (GPs) in roles in Predominantly Urban areas, by numbers of those who left/joined a role, England, 2019/20 to 2022/23 (Note D-1, Note D-2)

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacked columns. GPs who joined a permanent role are represented with solid bars, whilst those who left a permanent role are represented with dotted bars.



NHS General Practices explanatory notes

- Note D-1**

Data has been rounded to the nearest 10 GPs. Unrounded data is available in the [Health and Wellbeing supplementary data tables](#).

- Note D-2**

In this section, a [Rural-Urban Classification](#) has been applied using the sub-Integrated Care Board (or Clinical Commissioning Group) of each General Practitioner.

- Note D-3**

Source: [General Practice Workforce - NHS Digital](#). Data has been taken from 31st March of each year.

- Note D-4**

According to [NHS definitions](#) General Practitioners (GPs) can be a salaried GP or a GP partner. A salaried GP is employed by a GP practice, Local Authority, Integrated Care Board (ICB), or sub-ICB location. Whereas a GP partners are self-employed GPs who are responsible for running their own practice. It either case they can work full-time or part time. Full time is considered to be 37.5 hours per week and part-time is anything less than that. Where available, actual FTE values were used for individuals. Where data were not available, estimates of FTE were used based on contractual hours.

- Note D-5**

Not all General Practitioners (GPs) will hold a permanent position at one or more practices. According to [NHS definitions](#) they can also be: (i) Locum GPs; (ii) GP retainers; or GPs in training.

Locum GPs are GPs who provide service sessions in general practice on a temporary basis. They may work in the practices for relatively long periods but may also provide cover on a short-term or ad hoc basis. This

group includes Locums covering vacancies, sickness, and maternity/paternity absence. GP retainers are fully qualified GPs who deliver a maximum of four sessions in general practice per week to retain skills and progress their careers potentially with a view to increasing their working commitment in the future. GPs in training are fully registered physicians who are being trained for general practice under an arrangement approved by the Secretary of State. This category of GPs includes Foundation Training (FT) 1/2 and Speciality Training (ST).

E. Childcare provision

Childcare is changing in both Rural and Urban areas; in the last 7 years the number of providers has reduced alongside a move away from childminders and towards childcare on non-domestic premises; and the overall quality of childcare has improved.

Summary

Childcare provision in both Rural and Urban areas is an important service that some parents need in order to take up employment.

In 2022 childminders were the most common form of childcare provider in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas and accounted for 47% and 46% of providers respectively. The distribution of childcare providers is changing; comparing 2015 to 2022 shows that there has been a shift away from childminders towards childcare on non-domestic premises. This shift was bigger in Predominantly Urban areas than in Predominantly Rural areas.

In March 2022 there were 13,000 childcare providers in Predominantly Rural areas and 47,300 in Predominantly Urban areas. The number of active childcare providers in Predominantly Rural areas decreased by 28% between 2015 and 2022. A large loss of childcare providers does not necessarily mean an equivalent loss of childcare places; in 2015 there were 270,000 childcare places on the Early Years Register (EYR) in Predominantly Rural areas and by 2022 the number of places had fallen by 5.1% to 255,000.

In 2022, 7,900 providers (97%) in Predominantly Rural areas received a Good or Outstanding rating at their most recent inspection and only 100 were rated Inadequate. The overall quality of childcare providers has improved in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas since 2015. The proportion of providers judged to be Good or Outstanding has increased by 10% in Predominantly Rural areas and by 13% in Predominantly Urban areas.

For 3- or 4-year-old children, in 2022, the median hourly fee was £4.79 in Predominantly Rural areas and £4.93 in Predominantly Urban (excluding London) and both were less than the overall median fee for England (£5.38) which was pushed up by expensive childcare in London (£7.04 per hour). A parent can expect to pay more for childcare for a 2-year-old than a 3- or 4-year-old. For 2-year-old children the median hourly fee was £4.95 in Predominantly Rural areas and £4.99 in Predominantly Urban (excluding London) areas.

Childcare provider types

In England it has become common for both parents, or the single parent, to be in employment rather than the child having a full time stay at home parent. Formal childcare then becomes an important service to allow parents to balance parenting and earning. Many parents need to use formal childcare such as those described in Table E-1. Sometimes this will be instead of or in conjunction with informal arrangements such as the additional support provided by grandparents.

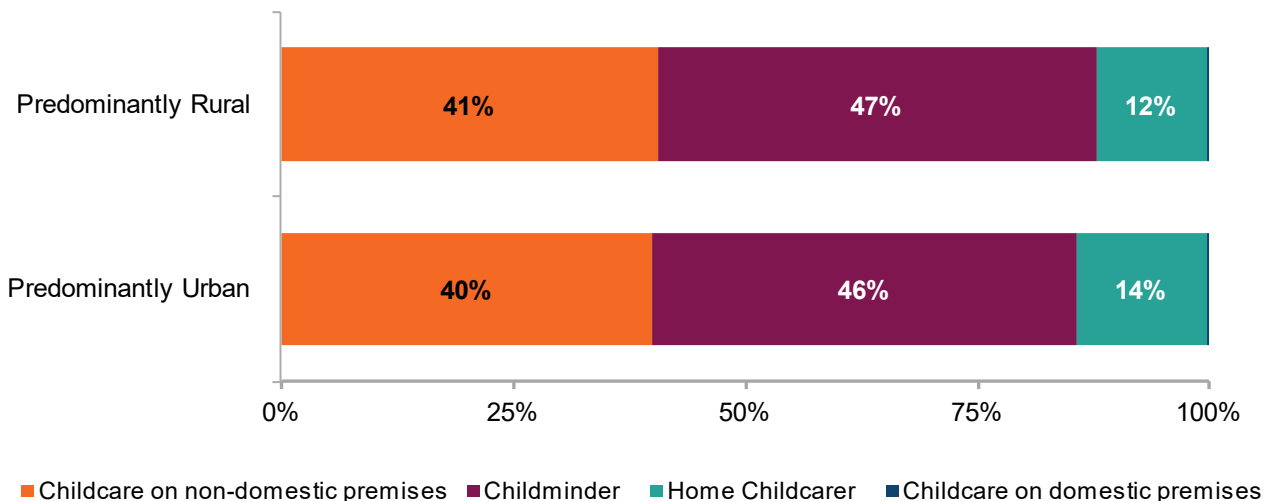
Table E-1: Definitions for formal childcare categories

Type of Provider	Description
Childcare on non-domestic premises	Nurseries, pre-schools, holiday clubs and other group-based settings, usually registered on the Early Years Register (EYR) because they look after children aged 0 to 5 years.
Childminders	People who look after one or more children they are not related to for payment or reward. The care takes place in a home that is not the child’s own. The majority register on the EYR because they look after children aged 0 to 5 years, but those who look after 5 to 7-year olds need to register on the Childcare Register (CR).
Home childcarers (nannies)	Individuals who care for children aged 0 to 18 years wholly or mainly in the child’s own home. They are not required to register with Ofsted. Though they may choose to do so on the Voluntary Childcare Register (VCR).
Childcare on domestic premises	Where four or more people look after children together in a home that is not the child’s. The majority are registered on the EYR and some are registered on the CR, depending on the age of the children they look after.

Figure E-1 is a stacked bar chart which shows that in 2022 childminders were the most common form of childcare provider in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas and accounted for 47% and 46% of providers respectively. The second most common provider type was childcare on non-domestic premises (nurseries) which was 41% of providers in Predominantly Rural areas and 40% of providers in Predominantly Urban areas. Home childcare (nannies) is marginally more prevalent in Predominantly Urban areas than Predominantly Rural areas.

Figure E-1: A stacked bar chart showing the proportion of childcare providers, by type of provider (Table E-1) and by Rural-Urban Classification, March 2022, England

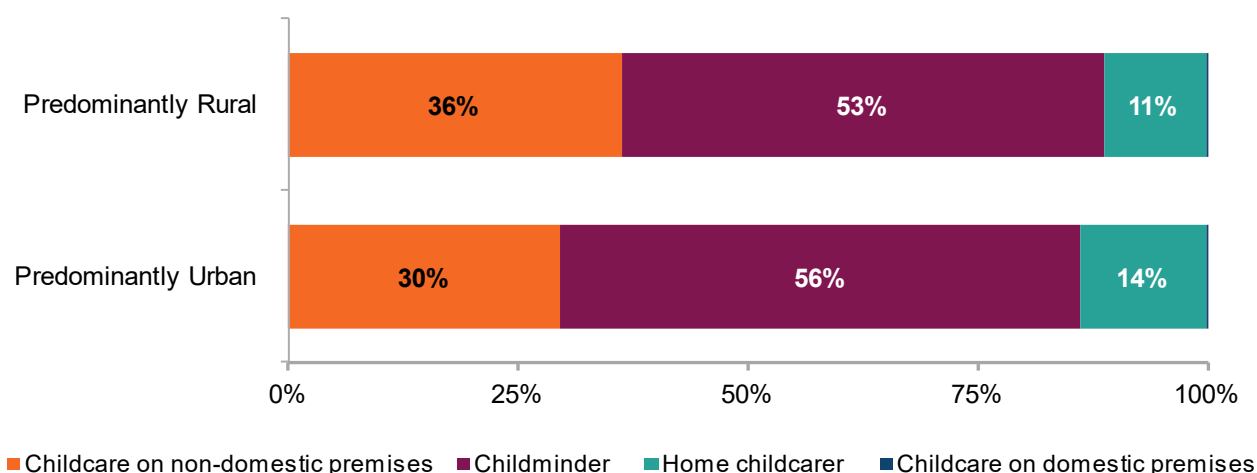
The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacks in the bars.



The distribution of childcare providers is changing. Figure E-2 is a stacked bar chart which shows the proportion of childcare providers by provider type in 2015. In 2015 childminders were still the most popular provider type in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas followed by childcare on non-domestic premises. Over the period 2015 to 2022 there has been a shift in the distribution away from childminders and towards childcare on non-domestic premises and this shift was bigger in Predominantly Urban areas than in Predominantly Rural areas. This shift might in part have been driven by the fact that it is easier to meet certain regulations and expected standards in a purpose-built setting generating income from more children than a single childminder can cater for.

Figure E-2: A Stacked bar chart showing the proportion of childcare providers, by type of provider (Table E-1) and by Rural-Urban Classification, March 2015, England

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacks in the bars.



Number of childcare providers

In March 2022 there were 68,000 childcare providers in England, of which 13,000 were in Predominantly Rural areas and 47,300 were in Predominantly Urban areas (Table E-2). In Predominantly Rural areas there were 6,100 childminders and 5,300 providers offering a childcare service on non-domestic premises.

Table E-2: Number of Childcare Providers, by type of provider and by Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification, March 2022, England

	Childcare on non-domestic premises	Childminders	Home childcare (nannies)	Childcare on domestic premises	Total providers
Predominantly Rural	5,280	6,140	1,560	40	13,010
Urban with Significant Rural	3,070	3,660	930	30	7,690
Predominantly Urban	18,940	21,580	6,630	180	47,320
England	27,290	31,370	9,120	240	68,030

The number of childcare providers in England is in decline. Figure E-3 is a line chart showing that the total number of active childcare providers has declined every year since 2015 in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas. Table E-3 shows that the number of active childcare providers in Predominantly Rural areas has decreased by 28% since 2015, while in Predominantly Urban areas there has been a 21% fall.

In March 2020 there was 14,500 childcare providers in Predominantly Rural areas and by March 2022 the number had fallen to 13,000 (Table EA1, [Health and Wellbeing data tables](#)). This is a loss of 10% of the childcare providers in Predominantly Rural areas in the first 2 years after the Covid-19 pandemic first hit the UK in early 2020. Predominantly Urban areas lost 9% of childcare providers over the same 2 year period.

Figure E-3: A line chart showing the Index of total number of childcare providers (2015 = 100), by Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification, March 2015 to March 2022, England

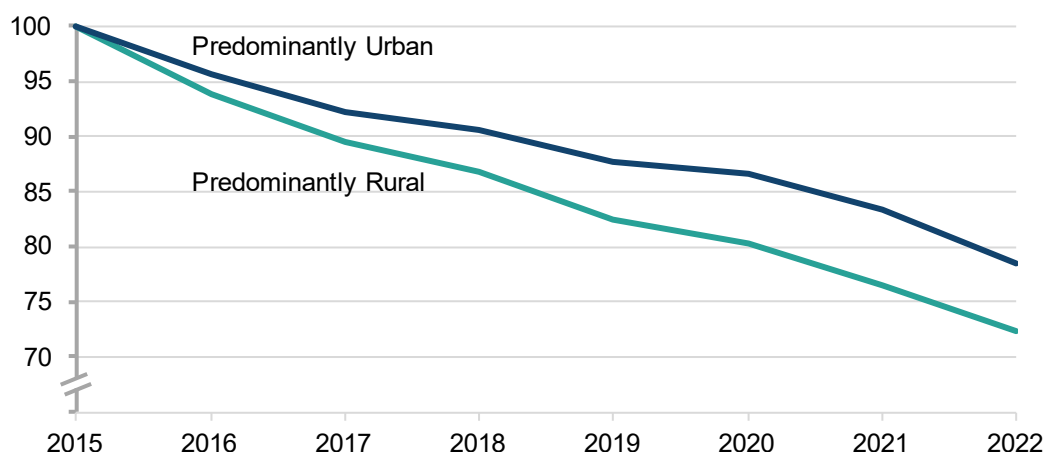


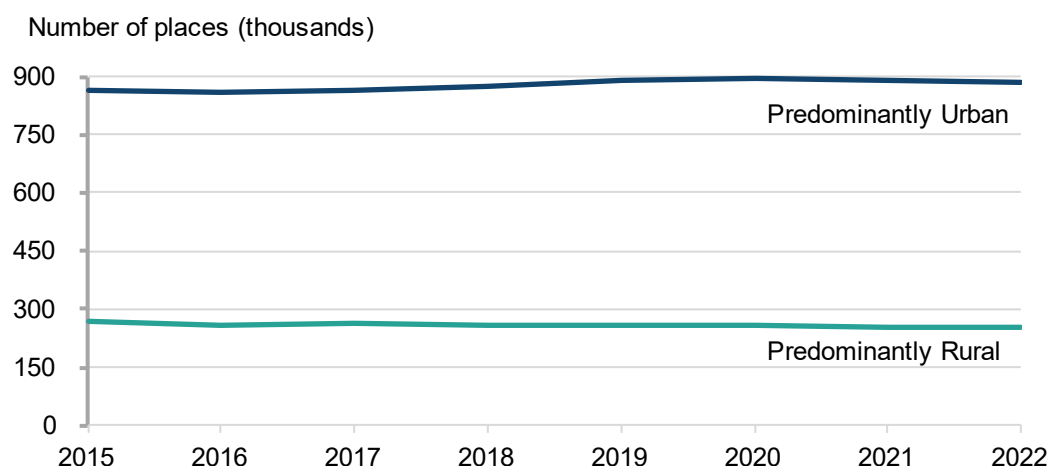
Table E-3: Index of change in Childcare Providers (2015 = 100), by Rural-Urban Classification, March 2015 to March 2022, England (Note E-3)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Predominantly Rural areas	100	93.8	89.6	86.8	82.4	80.3	76.4	72.3
Urban with Significant Rural	100	94.7	90.9	88.1	83.1	80.0	76.4	73.0
Predominantly Urban	100	95.6	92.2	90.6	87.6	86.6	83.3	78.5
England	100	95.3	91.3	89.5	86.0	84.2	80.8	76.3

A loss of childcare providers does not necessarily mean a loss of childcare places; expansion of, or the creation of new, larger providers can cover for the loss of smaller providers. Registered places are collected for all providers on the Early Years Register (EYR) – which includes all providers of pre-school childcare. Registered places are the capacity for the provider (Note E-4). It is an estimate of the number of children that can attend the provision at any one time not the number of places occupied, or the number of children benefiting from a place at the establishment.

In England there was 1.3 million childcare places on the on the EYR in March 2015 and in March 2022 there was still 1.3 million childcare places on the EYR. But as Figure E-4 shows, there has been a small change in the distribution of these 1.3 million places across Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas. In 2015 there was 270,000 childcare places on the EYR in Predominantly Rural areas and by 2022 the number of places had fallen by 5.1% to 255,000. By contrast in Predominantly Urban areas the number of places on the EYR increased from 860,000 in 2015 to 885,000 in 2022. This was an increase of 2.7%. In both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas more childcare places were available in March 2019 prior to the Covid-19 pandemic than were available in March 2022. In Predominantly Rural areas there was 3,900 (1.5%) fewer childcare spaces in 2022 than in 2019, whilst for Predominantly Urban areas there was 4,600 (0.5%) fewer spaces.

Figure E-4: A line chart of the number of registered places at providers on the Early Years Register (EYR) by Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification, March 2015 to March 2022, England (Note E-4, Note E-5)



Notes

- The childcare provider data in Table E-2 has been rounded to the nearest 10 therefore the totals might not equal the sum of the component parts.

Quality of childcare providers

Being part of the Early Years Register (EYR) is compulsory for providers who care for children up to the age of 5 years. Active EYR providers are inspected on a 4-year cycle and are given an Overall Effectiveness grade, in line with Ofsted’s Common Inspection Framework (CIF), which measures the overall quality of childcare provision. A complementary analysis focused on the quality of schools is contained with our education report (Note E-10).

Figure E-5 shows that between 2015 and 2022 the percentage of EYR childcare providers judged to be Good or Outstanding in Predominantly Rural areas increased from 87% to 97% of the inspected EYR providers. In Predominantly Urban areas the proportion judged to be Good or Outstanding increased from 83% to 96%. Whilst the proportion of providers judged to be Good or Outstanding was higher in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas in 2015, in 2022 this proportion was similar.

Table E-4 shows the number of childcare providers receiving each of the inspection outcome categories at their most recent assessment in both Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas in 2015 and 2022. In absolute terms, in 2022, 7,900 providers in Predominantly Rural areas received a Good or Outstanding rating at their most recent inspection and only 100 were rated Inadequate.

It should be noted that in 2022 the inspection status was unknown for 22% of providers in Predominantly Rural areas; while in Predominantly Urban areas the inspection status was unknown for 26% of providers. A higher proportion of providers had an unknown inspection status in 2022 than in 2015 when the proportions were 12% for Predominantly Rural areas and 15% for Predominantly Urban areas. The disruption to the inspection process caused by the Covid-19 pandemic will have had an impact on the proportion of providers with an unknown inspection status, but the proportion of providers with an unknown inspection status is lower in 2022 than it was in 2021 indicating that progress in being made to catch up.

Figure E-5: Early Year Registered (EYR) child carer inspection outcomes as percentage of total EYR childcare providers, by Parliamentary Constituency Rural-Urban Classification, March 2022 (top chart) and March 2015 (bottom chart), England

Only bars representing more than 5% are labelled and the legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacks in the bars.

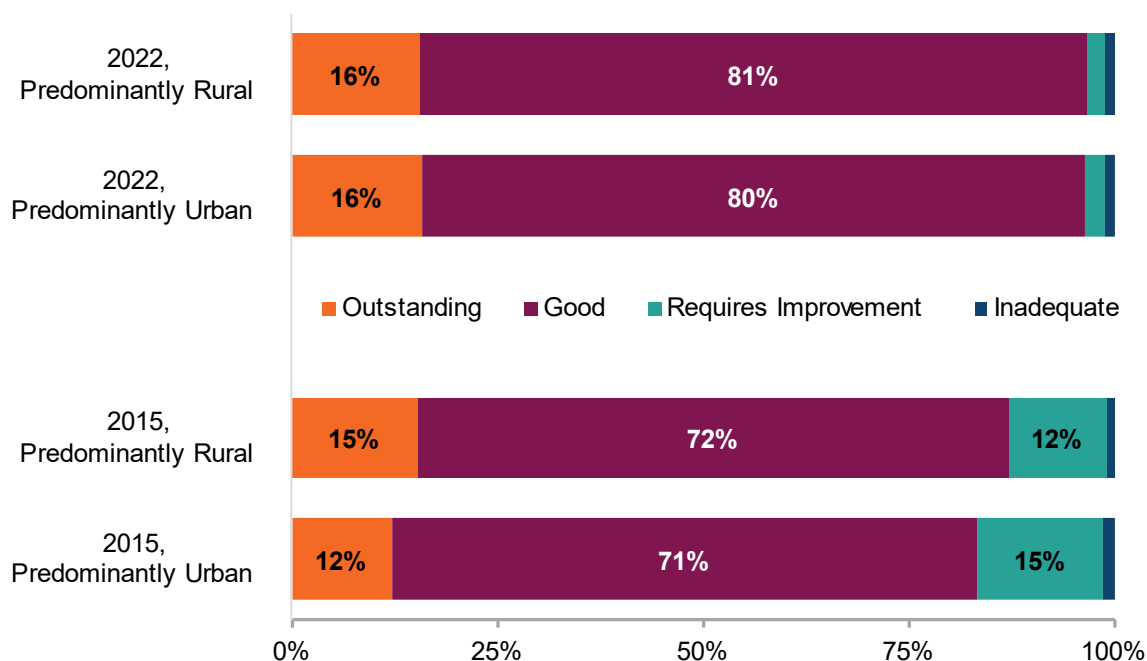


Table E-4: Number of Early Year Registered child carers most recent inspection outcome, by Rural-Urban Classification, 2015 and 2022, England

	2015, Predominantly Rural	2022, Predominantly Rural	2015, Predominantly Urban	2022, Predominantly Urban
Inspections with known outcome	13,510	8,170	41,550	27,030
Outstanding	2,060	1,280	5,050	4,300
Good	9,720	6,620	29,590	21,760
Requires improvement	1,590	170	6,340	670
Inadequate	150	100	570	310
Inspections with unknown outcome	1,860	2,270	7,360	9,530

Notes

- The inspection data presented in Table E-4 & Figure E-5 are as of March in the reference year specified. The data in Table E-4 has been rounded to the nearest 10 therefore the totals might not equal the sum of the component parts.
- The percentages presented in Figure E-5 are calculated on the basis of the total number of providers with a known inspection outcome. More providers had an unknown inspection outcome in 2022 than in 2015.

Cost of childcare

When parents use formal childcare to allow them to balance parenting and earning there is obviously a cost of doing so.

The Department for Education collect information on the cost of childcare as part of the [Childcare and early years provider survey](#) (SCEYP). SCEYP covers childcare provided by group-based providers, school-based providers and childminders. Note E-6 provides more information on these provider types.

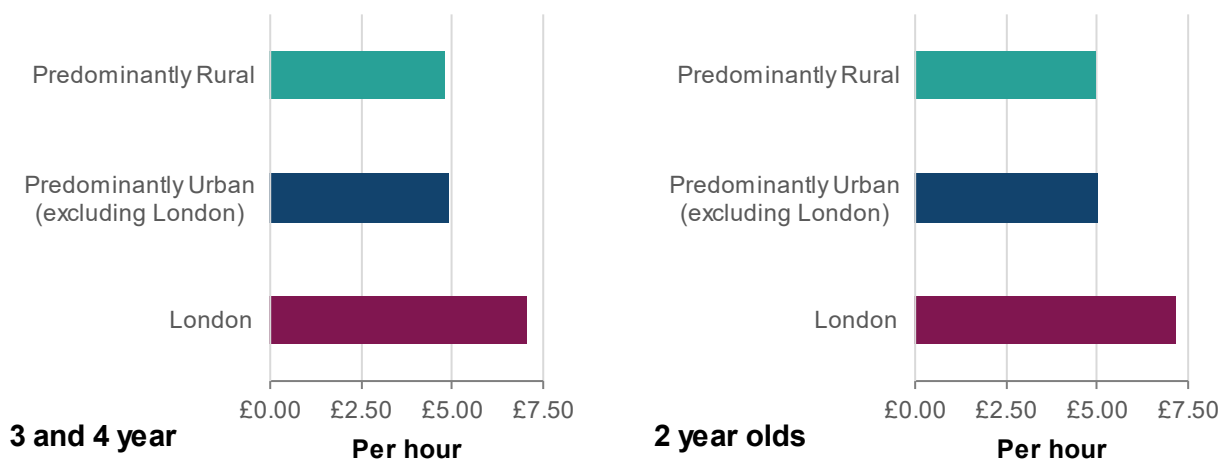
The 2022 survey collected the average hourly fee at (Upper Tier) Local Authority level (Note E-7) for both 2-year-old children and 3- or 4-year-old children. Both the mean and the median hourly cost was collected. For most Local Authorities the mean cost was higher than the median cost and for more than 20 Local Authorities the mean cost was more than 50p per hour more than the median cost (Note E-8). This implies that the distribution of hourly rates for childcare is skewed such that there are some much more expensive providers raising the overall mean childcare cost. These outliers coupled with relatively small sample sizes for some Local Authorities caused the precision of the mean for at least a third of the Local Authorities to be quite low (Note E-9); therefore, in our analysis we have used the median estimates.

The cost of childcare in London is a lot more expensive that it is elsewhere in the country, so we have separated London from the other Urban areas into its own category. This allows for a better comparison of the costs between Predominantly Rural and Predominantly Urban areas.

For 3- or 4-year-old children, in 2022, the median hourly fee was £4.79 in Predominantly Rural areas and £4.93 in Predominantly Urban (excluding London) areas (Figure E-6 – left-hand bar chart). The difference between these values was quite small and both were less than the overall median fee for England (£5.38) and over £2 per hour less than the median childcare fee for 3- or 4-year-olds in London (which was £7.04). In a hypothetical scenario where a parent has a full-time job of 37 hours per week and needs childcare for 42 hours per week (to allow 30 mins to get to and from work after drop-off and before pick-up), using the median fee the parent would spend £5.83 per week less for this childcare in Predominantly Rural than in Predominantly Urban (excluding London) areas.

Figure E-6: Bar chart showing the median the hourly fee for childcare by Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification, 2022, England

The left-hand chart is for 3- and 4-year-old children and the right-hand chart is for 2-year-old children. The RUC has been applied at Upper Tier Local Authority level (Note E-7) and London has been separated out from other Urban areas.



For 2-year-old children the median hourly fee was £4.95 in Predominantly Rural areas and £4.99 in Predominantly Urban (excluding London) areas (Figure E-6 – right-hand bar chart). These values

are very similar, and both were less than the overall median fee for England (£5.46) and over £2 per hour less than the median childcare fee for 2-year-olds in London (which was £7.17). Using the same hypothetical scenario of the working parent from the previous paragraph, if their child was a 2-year-old then the parent would only spend £1.72 per week less for this childcare in Predominantly Rural than in Predominantly Urban (excluding London) areas.

Childcare provision explanatory notes

- **Note E-1**

An unrounded version of Table E-2 is available in the [Health and Wellbeing data tables](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistical-digest-of-rural-england)<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistical-digest-of-rural-england>.

- **Note E-2**

In this section, a Rural-Urban Classification has been applied using the Parliamentary Constituency of each childcare provider, since this was the lowest level of geography published that covered all providers. As of the 2019 General Election there are 533 parliamentary constituencies in England.

- **Note E-3**

The total childcare provider data, used for the index, is drawn together from three Ofsted registers: Early Years Register (EYR), Compulsory Childcare Register (CCR) and Voluntary Childcare Register (VCR). The individual register data is found in the Ofsted providers level data ([Note E-5](#)).

A decline in childcare providers does not necessarily imply a decline in the number of childcare places available.

For more information see the Main findings and methodology report on the [Childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2020 Official Statistics homepage](#).

- **Note E-4**

Registered places are the number of children that may attend the provision at any one time. Registered places are not the number of places occupied, nor the number of children who may benefit from receiving places through providers offering sessions at different times of the day. Place numbers are only collected for providers on the Early Years Register (EYR). But being part of the EYR is compulsory for providers who care for children up to the age of 5 years. Provider type averages are used to estimate the number of places for a very small number of providers whose place numbers are not available at the time of the analysis.

- **Note E-5**

Source data for this section: [Ofsted Childcare providers level data as at 31 March 2022](#)

- **Note E-6**

Group-based providers (identified from the Ofsted register): providers registered with Ofsted and operating on non-domestic premises. Eligible group-based provision includes full day and sessional care for children below school age. The two main types of group-based providers covered are:

1. Private group-based providers: These are private companies and include employer-run childcare for employees.
2. Voluntary group-based providers: These are voluntary organisations, including community groups, charities, churches, or religious groups.

School-based providers (identified from the School Census). The two types of school-based providers are:

1. Maintained nursery schools: These are purpose-built maintained schools specifically for children in their early years and with a qualified teacher present.
2. School-based providers offering nursery: These are other maintained schools, and non-maintained schools, offering nursery provision.

Childminders (identified from the Ofsted register): Ofsted-registered childminders providing early years care and operating on domestic settings (childminders registered with a childminder agency are not included in the survey).

- **Note E-7**

The Department for Education (DfE)'s Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers (SCEYP) data uses Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLAs) of which there are only 152 in England. 21 of these UTLAs are Predominantly Rural, 109 are Predominantly Urban and the remaining 22 are Urban with Significant Rural. The SCEYP data used for this analysis contained only 150 UTLAs, it did not cover the Isles of Scilly or City of London. Data for 2-year-olds was not available for Barking and Dagenham.

Figures quoted in the cost of childcare text are rounded to the nearest penny, but any calculations were done using unrounded figures.

- **Note E-8**

For 2-years-olds the mean hourly fee is higher than the median hourly fee in 132 of 149 UTLAs; and for 23 of these UTLAs the mean is at least 50p per hour more than the median. For 3- and 4-year-olds the mean hourly fee is higher than the median hourly fee in 131 of 150 UTLAs; and for 25 of these UTLAs the mean is at least 50p per hour more than the median.

- **Note E-9**

For 2-years-olds the confidence interval associated with the mean hourly childcare fee is more than +/- 50p per hour in 55 UTLAs. For 3- and 4-years-olds the confidence interval associated with the mean hourly childcare fee is more than +/- 50p per hour in 64 UTLAs.

- **Note E-10**

School inspection results are covered in "[Statistical Digest of Rural England: 6 - Education, Qualifications and Training](#)"

F. Loneliness

People in Rural areas are marginally less likely to report loneliness than in Urban areas and Rural people are more likely to meet friends and family in person than Urban people.

Summary

Loneliness is a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship and it occurs when there is mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want. There is variation in how people understand the term “loneliness” and some people or groups of people within society might be reluctant to admit to loneliness, so we assess levels of loneliness with a direct and an indirect measure.

The reported rates of loneliness using the direct measure were slightly lower in Rural areas than in Urban areas in 2021/22. Just under 6% of people living in Rural areas reported feeling lonely often or always, compared with just over 6% of people living in Urban areas. Changes in reported levels of loneliness over the period 2017/18 to 2021/22 were marginal.

People in Rural areas reported a slightly lower occurrence of loneliness in 2021/22 when the assessment is made with an indirect estimate. This means that 7% of people in Rural areas often feel at least two of the following three things: (i) “they lack companionship”; or (ii) “left out”; or (iii) “isolated from others”. In both Rural and Urban areas when using the indirect measure of loneliness people were less lonely in 2021/22 than they were in 2020/21.

In 2021/22 there was little difference in the proportion of people who meet up with friends and family at least once a week in Rural and Urban areas. The most common way of keeping in touch with friends and family in both Rural and Urban areas was by text and instant messages. 84% of people living in Rural areas used text or instant messages compared to 80% calling friends and family on an audio or video call.

Frequency of Loneliness

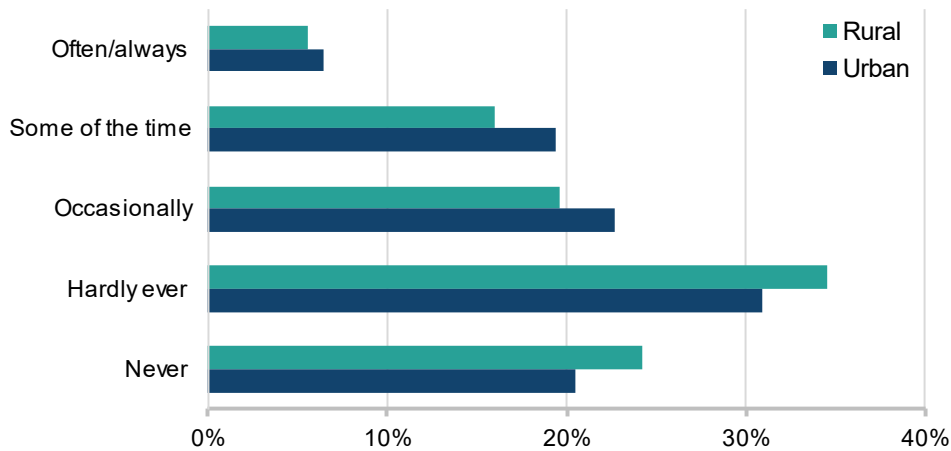
As explained in the [Loneliness Strategy](#), loneliness is “a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want.” Loneliness is therefore different to social isolation.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) [Community Life Survey includes questions on loneliness](#) (Note F-4). One of the questions asks: “How often do you feel lonely?”. Using this question Figure F-1 shows reported rates of loneliness were slightly lower in Rural areas than in Urban areas in 2021/22. Just under 6% of people living in Rural areas reported feeling lonely often or always, compared with just over 6% of people living in Urban areas. 35% of people living in Rural areas reported feeling lonely hardly ever compared with 31% of people living in Urban areas. 1 in every 5 people living in Rural areas (20%) reported never feeling lonely compared with 24% of people living in Urban areas (roughly 1 in 4 people).

Changes in reported levels of loneliness were examined over the period 2017/18 to 2021/22. The changes were marginal and within the confidence levels for the estimates in both Rural and Urban areas. For those wishing to see the proportions please go to Table FA3 and Table FA4 in the [Health and Wellbeing data tables](#).

Figure F-1: Responses to the question “How often do you feel lonely?”, by Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2021/22 (Note F-1, Note F-4)

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of bars.



Indirectly estimating loneliness

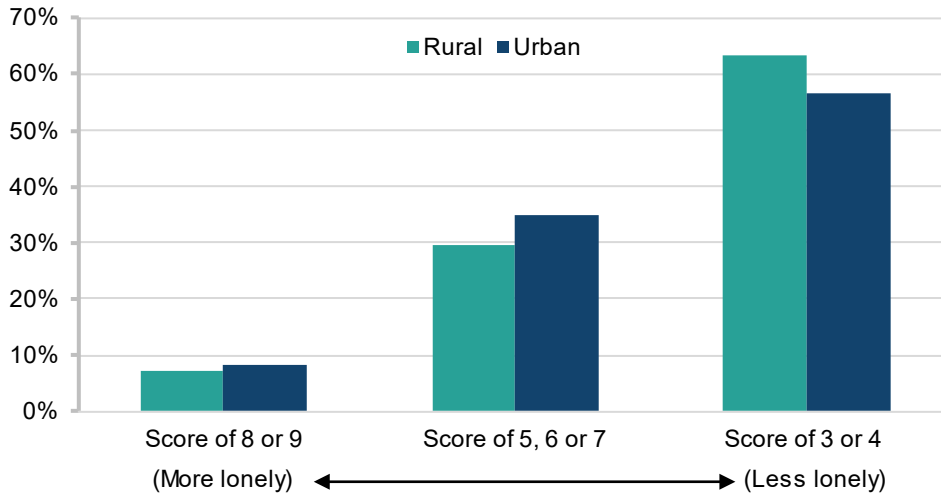
There is variation in how people understand the term “loneliness” and some people or groups of people within society might be reluctant to admit to loneliness. A multi-item measure that does not mention loneliness directly can be helpful to address these two issues. The University of California developed a three-item loneliness score, that takes responses from three questions and combines them into a composite loneliness score, based on feeling: (i) “they lack companionship”; or (ii) “left out”; or (iii) “isolated from others”. On this scoring system, higher scores indicate a higher level of loneliness (Note F-2).

Similar to the direct loneliness estimate (Figure F-1), people in Rural areas reported a slightly lower occurrence of loneliness in 2021/22 when the assessment is made with this indirect estimate

(Figure F-2). 7% of people living in Rural areas and 8% of people living in Urban areas scored an 8 or 9. This means that 7% of people in Rural areas often feel at least two of the following three things: (i) “they lack companionship”; or (ii) “left out”; or (iii) “isolated from others”. However, 63% of people in Rural areas scored a 3 or 4 on the loneliness scale (are least lonely) compared with 57% in Urban areas.

Figure F-2: Composite scores for loneliness in Rural and Urban areas based on the University of California’s three-item loneliness scale, England, 2021/22 (Note F-2, Note F-4)

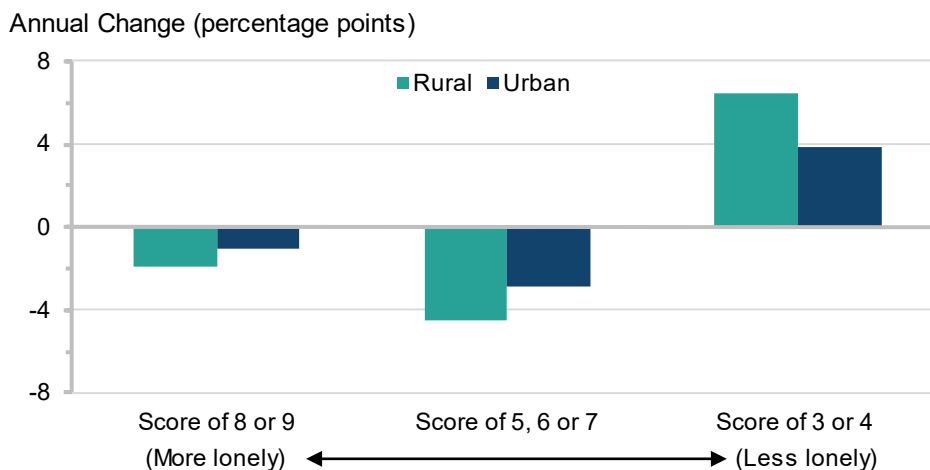
The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the clusters of columns.



Using this composite score, people living in both Rural and Urban areas were less lonely in 2021/22 than they were in 2020/21 (Figure F-3). In Rural areas the proportion scoring a 3 or 4 was 6 percentage points higher in 2021/22 and the proportion scoring an 8 or a 9 was 2 percentage points lower. Whilst the trend was the same for Urban areas, the magnitude of the changes was smaller. This reduction in loneliness was an expected result given that the 2020/21 data covered a series of COVID-19 related restrictions that meant that contact with friends and family was limited beyond households.

Figure F-3: Change in the composite scores for loneliness (2021/22 compared to 2020/21) in Rural and Urban areas based on the University of California’s three-item loneliness scale, England, 2021/22 (Note F-2, Note F-4)

The legend is presented in the same order as the clusters of columns.



Friends, family and support networks

Taking time to meet and communicate with friends and family is an important way of combatting loneliness. As Table F-1 shows, in 2021/22 there was little difference in the proportion of people who meet up with friends and family at least once a week in Rural and Urban areas. These estimates were higher than those seen in 2020/21 for people living in Rural and Urban areas (67% and 66% respectively) reflecting the restrictions on face-to-face contact during the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in an increase in audio and video calls between family and friends. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is likely that many people had never made video calls over the internet using programs like Zoom or Skype; and if they had it was in a work, rather than a personal context (Note F-6). The result is that in 2020/21, 86% of people in Rural areas were speaking to family or friends at least once a week via audio or video calls. This is an increase from 79% in 2018/19 (Figure F-4). In 2021/22, the data showed that the proportion of people in Rural areas were speaking with friends and family on a weekly basis had fallen back to 80%. With the exception of 2020/21, there was a marginally smaller proportion of people making weekly calls to friends and family in Rural areas than in Urban areas over the period 2018/19 to 2021/22.

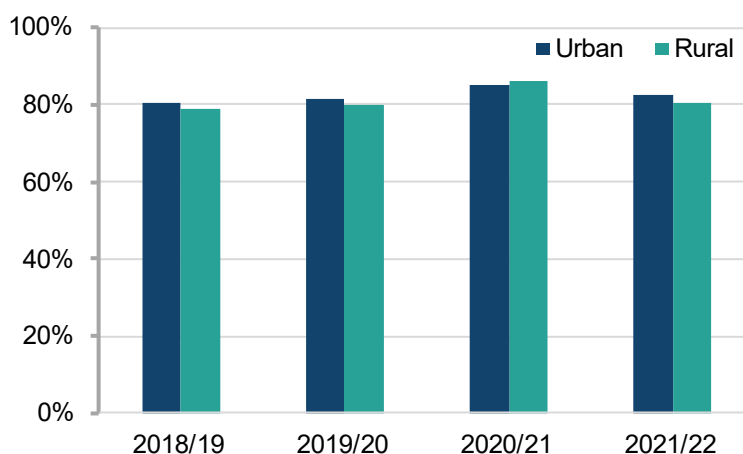
Table F-1: The proportion of people meeting or communicating at least once a week with friends and family through a variety of means in Rural and Urban areas of England (2021-22)

	Meet up in person with friends or family (%)	Speak to on the phone or have a video call with friends or family (%)	Email or write to friends or family (%)	Exchange texts or instant messages with friends or family (%)
Rural	73	80	34	84
Urban	70	83	33	87

The most common way of keeping in touch with friends and family in both Rural and Urban areas was by text and instant messages (Table F-1). It is a quick and easy way to stay in touch and was used on a weekly basis by 84% in Rural areas and 87% in Urban areas. This estimate remained unchanged from 2020/21. In 2021/22, only a third of people chose to email or write to friends and family on a weekly basis. This estimate has fallen from 41% in Rural areas and 36% in Urban areas in 2020/21.

Figure F-4: The proportion of people who speak to on the phone or have a video call with friends or family at least once a week by Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2018/19 to 2021/22 (Note F-4)

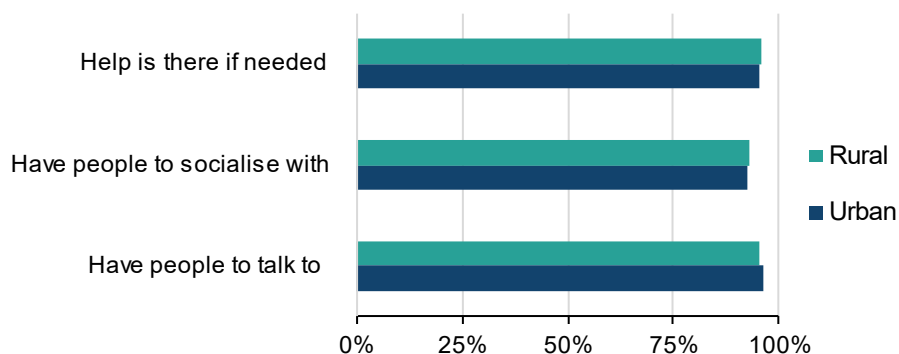
The legend is presented in the same order as the clusters of bars.



Most people felt that they had access to support networks when needed (Figure F-4). Whether somebody lived in a Rural or Urban area made little difference to their responses to these 3 questions (Note F-5). In Rural areas, for each of these questions 4% or 5% of respondents were unable to agree that they had access to the support mechanism mentioned in the question.

Figure F-5: The proportion of people agreeing with statements about their access to support networks by Rural-Urban Classification, England, 2021/22 (Note F-4)

The legend is presented in the same order as the clusters of bars. The statements have been summarised for the categorical axis. The full statements are available in Note F-5.



Loneliness explanatory notes

- **Note F-1**

“How often do you feel lonely?” is one of 4 [GSS harmonised questions](#) on different aspects of loneliness.

- **Note F-2**

The other 3 [GSS harmonised questions](#) come from University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) three-item loneliness scale and are used to generate an indirect estimate of loneliness. These questions are: “How often do you feel that you lack companionship?”; “How often do you feel left out?”; and “How often do you feel isolated from others?”.

Each of these questions has the possible responses: “Hardly ever or never”, “Some of the time” and “Often”. These responses score 3, 2 and 1 point respectively, leading to an overall score that has a range between 3 and 9. Higher scores indicate a greater degree of loneliness.

- **Note F-3**

A table showing the data presented in Figure F-1 and Figure F-2 is available in the [Health and Wellbeing data tables](#).

- **Note F-4**

The Department for Culture, Media & Sport took on responsibility for publishing results from the Community Life Survey (CLS) for 2016-17 onwards. The survey collects data for financial years from April to March the following year. Most of the data used in this section cover the period April 2021 to March 2022. The annual comparison compares this to the period April 2020 to March 2021. Figure F-4 uses data for the following 4 financial years: 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22. More information on the survey is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-life-survey--2>

- **Note F-5**

On Figure F-4 an abridged form of the survey questions has been used. These are the full survey questions. Help is there if needed: ‘Definitely or tend to agree that If I needed help there are people who would be there for me’.

Have people to socialise with: 'Definitely or tend to agree that If I wanted company or to socialise, there are people I can call on'.

Have people to talk to: 'Agree that there is one person or more you can really count on to listen to you when you need to talk'.

- **Note F-6**

From the data provided in the Community Life survey (CLS) publication it is not possible to separate out the video and telephone calls.

G. Volunteering and charity

In 2021/22, 62% of people in Rural areas said they had volunteered within the last year, compared to 53% in Urban areas. Similarly, 71% of people in Rural areas said they had given to charity in the past four weeks, compared to 65% in Urban areas.

Summary

The Community Life Survey is a household self-completion survey including questions on formal and informal volunteering, as well as charitable giving.

A greater proportion of people said they volunteered in Rural areas over the period 2013/14 to 2021/22 than did so in Urban areas; however, the proportion of people saying they volunteered has fallen in both Rural and Urban areas over this period, by 13 percentage points and 16 percentage points respectively. Volunteering is likely to reflect socio-economic factors, which differ between Rural and Urban areas.

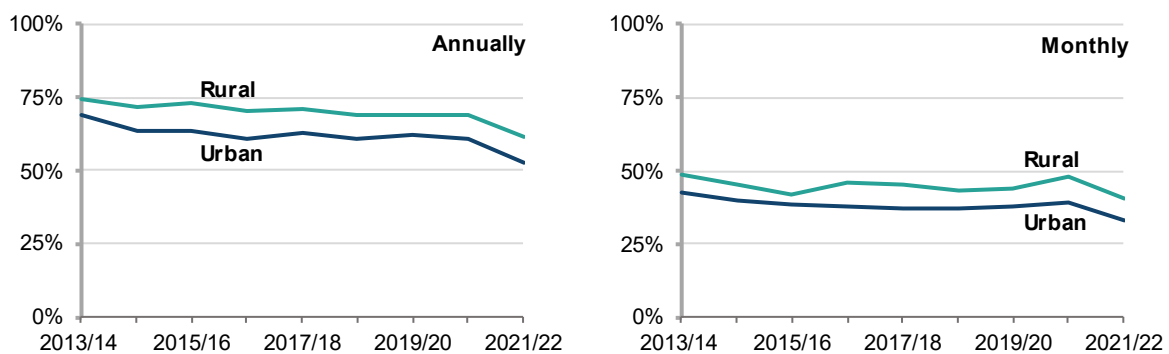
A greater proportion of people in Rural areas said they gave money to charity over the period 2013/14 to 2020/21 than did so in Urban areas. Between 2020/21 and 2021/22 the proportion reporting that they recently gave to charity rose by 6 percentage points in Rural areas and 3 percentage points in Urban areas, but this proportion is lower than the historical levels.

Volunteering

Many activities within local communities in both Rural and Urban areas could not happen without the help of volunteers. Some activities are regular, like running the local Scouts group, whilst others are one-off tasks like helping to organise a fete. As well as formal volunteering associated with groups people may give up their time on an informal basis to help others, for example delivering food to those isolating or sheltering during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (Note G-1). The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) includes questions on volunteering on the [Community Life Survey](#) (Note G-5).

Figure G-1 shows that a greater proportion of people say they volunteered in Rural areas over the period 2013/14 to 2021/22 than did so in Urban areas. A greater proportion of people say they volunteered at least once in the 12 months prior to their survey response (Figure G-1 left-hand chart) than did so in the month prior to their survey response (Figure G-1 right-hand chart).

Figure G-1: Percentage of people in Rural and Urban areas of England reporting that they volunteered either formally or informally within the year prior to completing the survey (left-hand chart) and within the month prior to competing the survey (right-hand chart), 2013/14 to 2021/22 (Note G-5)



In 2013/14, 74% of people in Rural areas reported volunteering (either formally or informally) within the last year, compared to 69% of people living in Urban areas. By 2020/21 this had fallen to 69% of people in Rural areas reporting volunteering (either formally or informally) within the last year, and to 61% of people living in Urban areas. This is a drop in participation in voluntary activity of 5 percentage points in Rural areas and 8 percentage points in Urban areas between 2013/14 and 2020/21.

Between 2020/21 and 2021/22 the proportion volunteering fell a further 7 percentage points in Rural areas and a further 8 percentage points in Urban areas. In 2021/22 only 62% of people in Rural areas reported volunteering (either formally or informally) within the last year, compared to only 53% of people living in Urban areas.

So, the overall drop in volunteering over the period 2013/14 to 2021/22 is 13 percentage points in Rural areas and 16 percentage points in Urban areas with more than half of the drop occurring during the most recent year.

In 2021/22, 40% of people living in Rural areas reported volunteering (either formally or informally) within the month prior to completing the survey, compared with 33% of people living in Urban areas. Between 2020/21 and 2021/22 the proportion who volunteered in the month prior to completing the survey fell by 8 percentage points in Rural areas and 6 percentage points in Urban

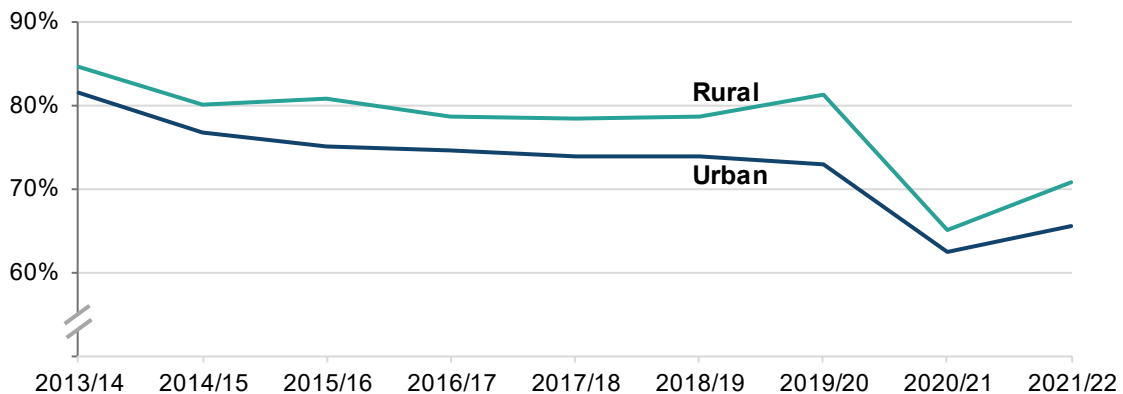
areas. For context, this decline in participation in both Rural and Urban areas is bigger than the overall fall in participation between 2013/14 and 2020/21 in Rural and Urban areas respectively.

Donating to charity

There are numerous charities in England in both Rural and Urban areas. The [Community Life Survey](#) has questions on giving to charity. In 2021/22, 71% of people living in Rural areas reported giving to charity in the past four weeks, compared with 65% of those in Urban areas. As shown in Figure G-2, in every year between 2013/14 and 2020/21 a greater proportion of people in Rural areas reported giving money to charity than in Urban areas. Socio-economic factors differ between Rural and Urban areas, which may affect differences in charitable giving.

People reporting having given to charity in the last four weeks fell by 16 percentage points in Rural areas and 10 percentage points in Urban areas between 2019/20 and 2020/21. The pandemic will have reduced both the opportunity and the ability to give. Between 2020/21 and 2021/22 the proportion reporting that they recently gave to charity rose by 6 percentage points in Rural areas and 3 percentage points in Urban areas, but the proportions are still lower than the historical levels. Overall, there has been a long-term decline in giving. People reporting having given to charity in the last four weeks fell by 14 percentage points in Rural areas and 16 percentage points in Urban areas between 2013/14 and 2021/22 (Figure G-2).

Figure G-2: Percentage of people in Rural and Urban areas of England reporting that they have given to charity in the past four weeks, 2013/14 to 2020/21 (Note D-5)



Volunteering and charity explanatory notes

- **Note G-1**

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.

- **Note G-2**

Tables detailing rates of both formal and informal volunteering broken down by broad Rural-Urban Classification covering 2013/14 to 2020/22 are available in the [Health and Wellbeing data tables](#).

- **Note G-3**

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.

- **Note G-4**

A table detailing rates of charitable giving in the past four weeks, broken down by broad Rural-Urban Classification covering 2013/14 to 2020/22 is available in the [Health and Wellbeing data tables](#)

- **Note G-5**

The Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) took on responsibility for publishing results from the Community Life survey (CLS) for 2016-17 onwards. The survey collects data for financial years from April to March the following year. More information on the survey is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-life-survey--2>.

Appendix 1: The 8 thematic reports that make up the Statistical Digest of Rural England (and the topics included within them)

1. [Population](#)

- A. Population level and change
- B. Population age profile
- C. Ethnicity
- D. Internal migration
- E. Local Authority population data

2. [Housing](#)

- A. Housing stock: age and type
- B. Housing stock: additions
- C. House prices
- D. Housing stock: affordable housing
- E. Second and empty homes
- F. Homelessness
- G. Land use change for housing

3. [Health and Wellbeing](#)

- A. Life expectancy
- B. Wellbeing
- C. NHS Dentistry provision
- D. General Practices
- E. Childcare provision
- F. Loneliness
- G. Volunteering and charity

4. [Communities and Households](#)

- A. Deprivation
- B. Poverty due to low income
- C. Household expenditure
- D. Police recorded crime and outcomes
- E. Crime surveys: local police and businesses
- F. Feelings about the local neighbourhood

5. [Connectivity and Accessibility](#)

- A. Broadband
- B. Travel behaviours
- C. Access to personal transport
- D. Access to services
- E. Home working

6. [Education, Qualifications and Training](#)

- A. Secondary education – GCSE Maths and English attainment
- B. School inspections
- C. Free school meals
- D. Alternative and specialist education provision
- E. Higher education
- F. Apprenticeships and on-the-job training
- G. Workforce education level

7. [Rural Economic Bulletin](#)

- A. Employment
- B. Earnings
- C. Redundancies
- D. Claimant count - Jobseeker's Allowance
- E. Output and productivity measured by Gross Value Added (GVA)
- F. Businesses - status, structure and composition
- G. Innovation and investment

8. [Energy](#)

- A. Fuel poverty
- B. Energy Performance Certificates: average Energy Efficiency Score
- C. Energy Performance Certificates: achieving energy efficiency category C
- D. Energy Costs
- E. Energy Consumption

Each of the 8 themes also has their own set of supplementary data tables that include the larger source data that could not be included in the presented document. The chapter headings above are hyperlinked to the home page for that specific digest theme. The supplementary tables can be accessed from these home pages.

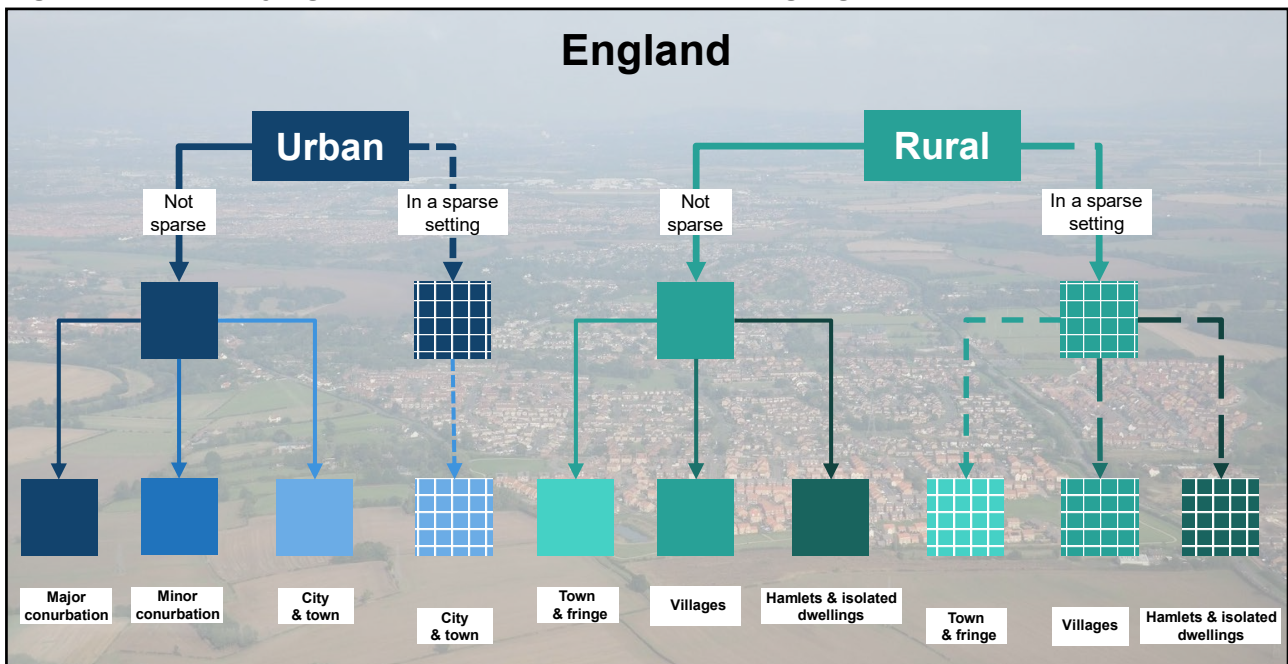
There is a further document including the individual Local Authority data tables, which have been separated for ease of use.

Appendix 2: Defining Rural areas

Wherever possible, 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.

Census Output Areas are the smallest areas for which data are available from Censuses. These Census Output Areas are assigned to one of four Urban or six Rural categories (Figure X-1) based on dwelling densities. Those described as “in a sparse setting” reflect where the wider area is sparsely populated (again based on dwelling densities). From Census Output Areas, other small area geographies can be classified based on how they map to Census Output Areas (such as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), Wards, and postcodes – [Note 1](#)).

Figure X-1: Classifying Rural and Urban areas for small geographical areas



A map showing the distribution of the Rural and Urban Census Output Areas is shown in Figure X-2.

When data are not available at a small geographical scale, it may be possible to apply the Rural-Urban Local Authority Classification or a similar classification for other larger geographies. This classification categorises districts and unitary authorities on a six-point scale from Rural to Urban. It is underpinned by Rural and Urban populations as defined by the Census Output Area Classification. A map of the geographical distribution of the Rural and Urban Local Authorities is shown in Figure X-3.

However, the Local Authority Classification also considers some Urban areas as Hub Towns (with populations of between 10,000 and 30,000). These Hub Towns have met statistical criteria (based on dwelling and business premise densities) to be considered hubs for services and businesses for a wider rural hinterland and their populations are therefore classified as effectively Rural for the purposes of determining the classification of the authority.

Figure X-2: Map of the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Census Output Areas in England

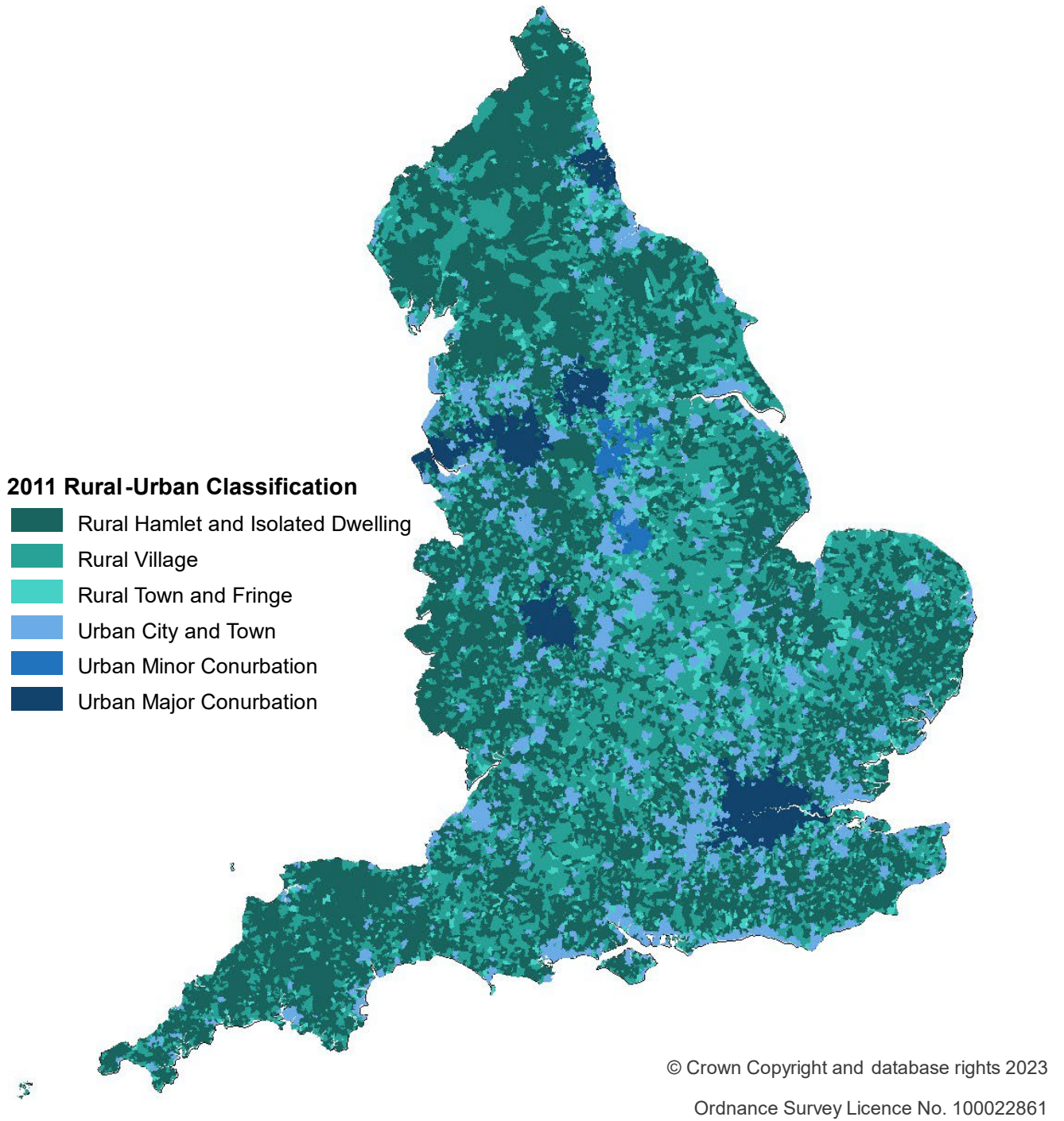
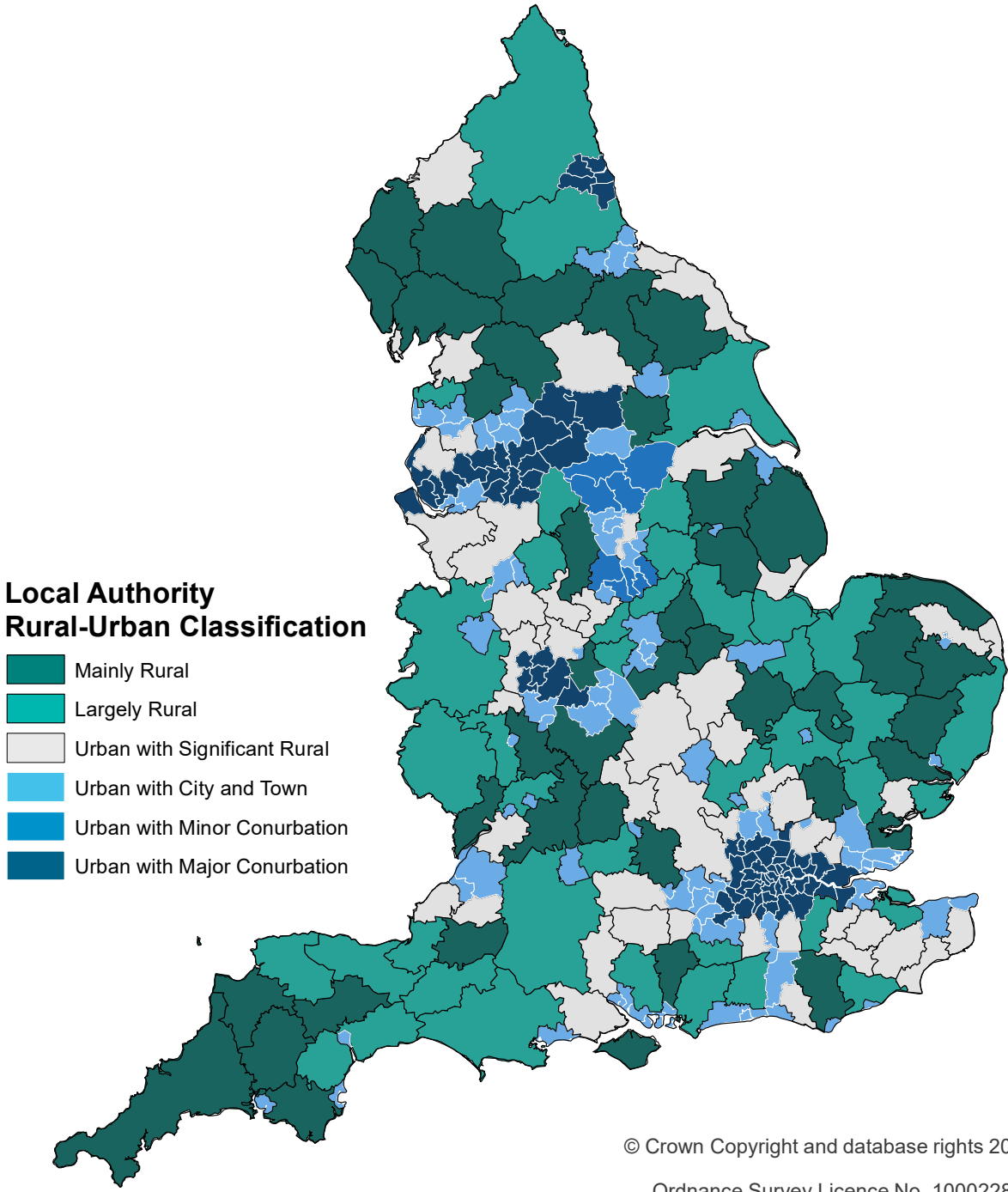
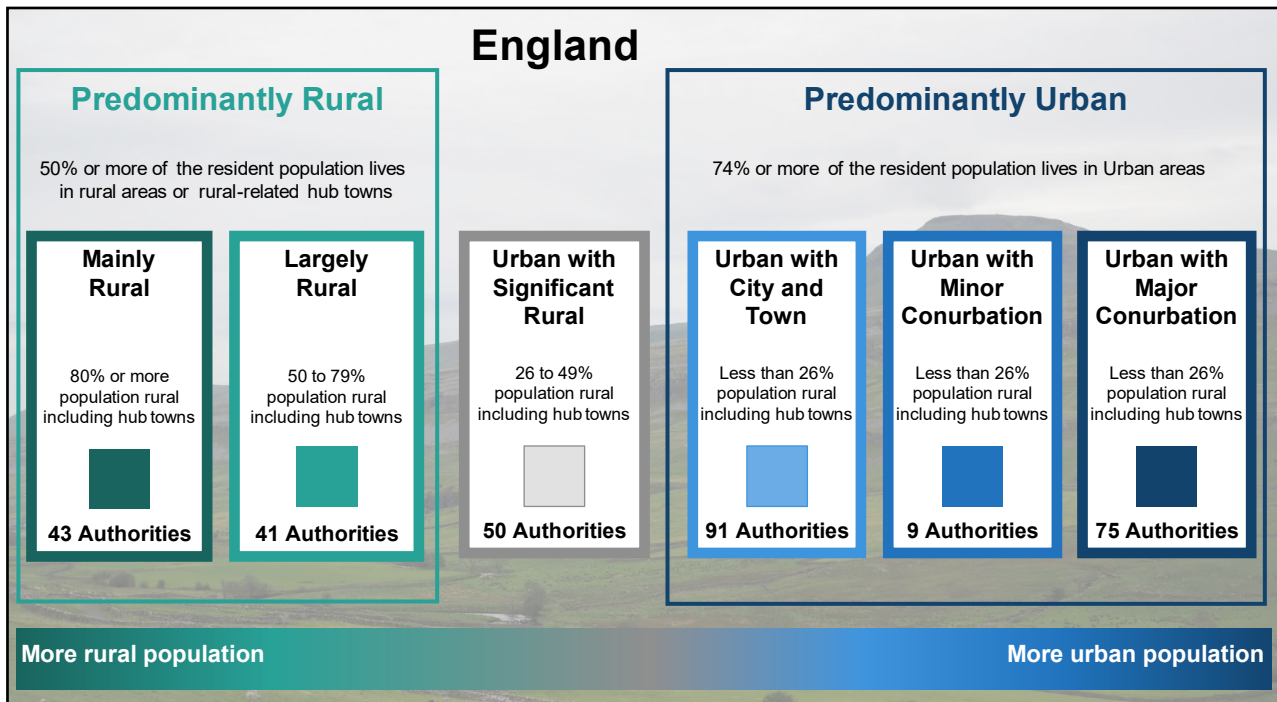


Figure X-3: Map of the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Local Authority Districts and Unitary Authorities in England



Under the classification, which is shown in Figure X-4, each Local Authority is assigned to one of six categories on the basis of the percentage of the total resident population accounted for by the combined Rural and Hub Town components of its population and its 'conurbation context'. The Local Authority Classification categories are frequently aggregated to 'Predominantly Rural', 'Urban with Significant Rural' and 'Predominantly Urban' as shown on Figure X-4.

Figure 4: 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Local Authority Districts and Unitary Authorities in England



It should be noted that the Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification is based on populations and settlement patterns, not on how much countryside there is. Authorities classified as Urban may have wide areas of countryside and may have sizeable Rural populations. The classification has been made according to the proportions of the population residing in Urban settlements and outside Urban settlements. More information on the classifications can be found at: [The Rural-Urban Definition](#).

Defining Rural areas explanatory notes

- **Note X-1:** Defining Super Output Areas and Wards

Census Output Areas (OAs) were created for publication of the results of the recent Censuses. They cover around 125 households. In practice few datasets are produced at OA level. However, other larger geographies can be built up from OAs. These include *Lower Layer Super Output Areas* (LSOAs) which typically contain 5 OAs, so contain approximately 625 households or a population of approximately 1,500 and a minimum 1,000. Their Rural-Urban Classification is based on the majority category of OAs they contain. Some other geographies, for example postcodes are classified based on the location of their central point and the classification of respective OA.

- **Note X-2:** Accessibility of Figure X-2

We accept that this map might not be accessible for all users, but it is difficult to develop a map containing six colours that will provide enough contrast between all colours to enable every user to see them, especially when the shaded areas are small. Separate maps (showing only three levels of shading) for Rural and Urban areas are available on request from: rural.statistics@defra.gov.uk