

This report presents findings from a survey of households in rural Wales undertaken by the Wales Rural Observatory (WRO) in 2010-11. It is the third in a series of household surveys carried out by the WRO and follows on from the previous surveys undertaken in 2004 and 2007. The results provide updated information and additional longitudinal data allowing further in-depth comparative work. Key themes explored in the report include: locality and demographics; the local social and community context; well-being and welfare; rural service provision, rural employment and the economy; and the environment.

KEY FINDINGS

- Households in rural Wales expressed high levels of satisfaction with their current place of residence.
- In line with previous surveys, the survey results reveal a pattern of population stability, which co-existed along considerable population change and mobility.
- One fifth of survey respondents were fluent Welsh speakers and a further 9% indicated that they spoke Welsh 'quite well'.
- A significant majority of residents (77%) either strongly agreed, or agreed that there was a sense of community in their area.
- 56% of respondents were actively involved in community activities organised by local and national groups and societies.
- Nearly half (48%) of all households had an annual income of less than £21,000. Of this figure, 17% had an annual household income of less than £10,000.
- Overall, respondents were generally happy with the provision of services within their local areas, with the exception of public transport and policing services.
- 55% of respondents were in employment (either full-time, part-time or in self-employment), a third were retired, 2% were in full-time education, 2% were unemployed, and 3% were registered as long-term sick.
- 42% of households were employed in public administration and defence, education, and health and social work – a slight increase from 2007. The figure for the agriculture, hunting and forestry sectors remained relatively low at 4%.



The Research

By a team at Cardiff University for the Wales Rural Observatory



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu
Gwledig Ewrop yn Buddsoddi
mewn Ardaliedd Gwledig
The European Agricultural Fund for
Rural Development: Europe Investing in
Rural Areas



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

This report presents findings from a survey of households in rural Wales undertaken by the Wales Rural Observatory (WRO) in 2010-11. It is the third in a series of household surveys carried out by the WRO, the previous surveys having been undertaken in 2004 and 2007. The results provide updated information and additional longitudinal data allowing further in-depth comparative work, which brings to light the various trends and processes affecting rural households in Wales over time.

The definition of rural Wales adopted for the survey was based on that provided in the Welsh Government's Rural Development Plan for Wales, 2007-2013. The survey sample included a total of 4,062 households. Of these, 1,158 were interviews with households that had participated in the 2007 survey, which constituted the longitudinal element of the survey. The remaining interviews (2,904 households) were drawn from a random sample of telephone numbers, which was structured by quotas for the Local Authority areas, and based on a range of factors including gender, age and economic activity.

Respondents were asked to provide information about themselves, their household and other individuals who lived within the household. Interviewers made use of three basic types of questions during the telephone survey: multiple choice or attitudinal statements; numerical or factual questions; and textual open-ended questions. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. All respondents were offered the choice of being interviewed in either Welsh or English.

FINDINGS

Demography and Household structure

The results indicate that 24% of the survey sample was single-person households; 40% contained two people; 16% of households had three people; and the remaining 20% had four or more people.

Just under half (49%) of all households owned their properties outright, while just over a third (34%) of respondents had a mortgage. The remaining households were either rented privately (7%) or through a social landlord (8%).

Area and settlement type

Just under half (49%) of respondents lived in a country village and a third lived in a town. Of the remainder, 14% lived in a property or farm in the open countryside and a very small proportion (3%) indicated that they lived either on the outskirts of a big city or in a smaller city.

The survey report reveals high levels of satisfaction with place of residence among rural residents, with 93% stating that they were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their local areas as places to live.

Population change

In line with the previous surveys in 2004 and 2007, the survey highlighted a pattern of population stability, which co-existed alongside considerable population change.

Just under a third of respondents had lived in their present property for 20 years or more, and a further 47% had resided in their property for a period of between five and 21 years.

The survey revealed population movements characterised by both short-distance and long-distance

migratory movements. Of the respondents who indicated that they had not always lived in their local area, the majority (63%) lived less than 20 miles from their previous place of residence; however, it is important to note that 15% had moved from an area located between 20 and 100 miles away and just under a quarter (23%) had moved a distance of more than 100 miles.

The Welsh Language

One fifth of survey respondents were fluent Welsh speakers and a further 9% indicated that they spoke Welsh 'quite well'.

The traditional heartland of rural Wales had a strong representation of fluent Welsh speakers, with the highest proportions found in Gwynedd (49%); Anglesey (35%); Carmarthenshire (25%); and Ceredigion (24%).

Community and Culture

The survey provided evidence of close family and community networks amongst rural households in Wales, with a half of all respondents indicating that they lived less than five miles from a family member.

The majority of residents surveyed (77%) either strongly agreed, or agreed that there was a sense of community in their area, while 56% of respondents were actively involved in community activities organised by local and national groups and societies.

Well being and welfare

Nearly half (48%) of all households had an annual income of less than £21,000, 17% of which earned less than £10,000 per annum. Of the remaining households, 40% had an annual income of between £21,000 and £51,999, and 12% of households had annual incomes of £52,000 or more.

Despite the relatively low income levels, 34% of households indicated that they were living comfortably on their present income, and a further 48% indicated that they were 'coping'.

Just over half (52%) of all households surveyed considered that people in their local area were living in poverty, which was higher than the equivalent figure recorded in the 2007 survey (43%).

Local services

Overall, respondents were generally happy with the provision of services within their local areas. Over two-thirds of all respondents felt that the standard of post office services, schools, the fire service, NHS services, food shops and banks and buildings societies was good in their area. The exceptions were public transport and policing services, both of which received the lowest positive ratings, at 40% and 44% respectively.

Low-income households were much more likely to experience difficulties in accessing key health and retail services, such as hospitals, GP and dental surgeries, supermarkets and petrol stations, as were those respondents who either lived in a village or in a property in the open countryside.

Employment

55% of all respondents were in employment (either full-time, part-time or in self-employment) and a third were retired. Of the remainder, 2% were in full-time education, 2% were unemployed, 3% were registered as long-term sick or disabled, and 3% indicated that they looked after the home.

The distribution of employment sectors across rural households was broadly similar to the results for the previous survey in 2007.

The results indicate a slightly higher proportion of households employed in public administration and defence, education, and health and social work – an increase from 39% in 2007 to 42% in 2010. The results also show that 22% of respondents were employed in wholesale and retail, transport, and hotels and catering; 8% were employed in manufacturing; 6% in the construction industry; while the figure for the agriculture, hunting and forestry sectors remained low at 4%.

In the 16-34 age category, 43% of all respondents reported that they had experienced difficulties finding work in their local area.

Environment

The survey explored how respondents perceived their natural environment. A quarter of respondents felt that the quality of their local natural environment had improved to some degree over the last five years. Just under two-thirds (63%) did not perceive any significant changes, while 10% indicated that there had been a decline.

A significant proportion of all households surveyed (92%) owned or had access to a motor vehicle. Of these households, 46% owned one vehicle, 40% owned two vehicles and 14% owned three or more vehicles.

The survey also revealed a continuing strong dependency on personal motorised transport, with a third of all respondents indicating that their dependency had increased over the last five years, and a further 58% stating that their dependency had remained relatively stable. Only 8% of all respondents noted that their reliance on motorised transport had decreased during the five year period.

For Further information

The full report, Household Survey 2010 is published by the WRO. It is available free as a download from:
www.walesruralobservatory.org.uk.

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