

This report provides an overview of results from a survey of 4071 households in rural Wales undertaken for the Wales Rural Observatory [WRO] during 2007. It builds on a similar survey carried out in 2004. The report analyses the survey data by focusing on the following themes: Population and Migration, Community, Well-Being and Welfare, Local Services, Employment, and Environment.

### KEY FINDINGS

- The survey found evidence of population stability, together with elements of population change.
- A strong sense of community attachment was expressed by almost all respondents.
- Quality of life was rated as good by 92% of respondents.
- 18% of respondents were fluent Welsh speakers and 47% could speak some Welsh.
- 18% of households had gross annual household incomes of less than £10K, 31% had £10K - £21K, 39% had £21K - £52K, and 12% had more than £52. 46% of respondents were receiving benefits.
- Generally, respondents perceived the quality of Services in rural Wales as good. Public transport and the police received the worst ratings.
- One quarter of respondents had experienced difficulties finding suitable employment.
- Unemployment was 3% and Economic Inactivity was 30%.
- The Service sector dominated employment at 77%. Public administration (12%), Education (12%) and Health and Social Work (15%) were particularly important.
- 32% of respondents considered that the local environment had improved to some degree over the past five years. Only 11% perceived some deterioration.

### The Research

By a team at Cardiff University for the Wales Rural Observatory (WRO)



## BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The 2007 Household survey built on a similar survey conducted by the WRO in 2004. Designed by researchers at the WRO, it was administered and conducted for the Observatory by GfK NOP Social Research between May and July 2007. Data were collected through a telephone survey on a representative sample of 4071 households, containing 9851 people, in rural Wales. The definition of rural Wales used for this survey was broader than the previous and was based on that provided by the Welsh Assembly Government in its Consultation on the Draft Rural Development Plan for Wales (2007 – 2013).

Respondents were asked about themselves, and other individuals within their households. They were asked to respond to a series of attitudinal statements; to provide factual data such as household income; and to answer open-ended questions that focused on perceptions of their local area. The telephone interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. Interviewees were offered the choice of conducting the interviews in either Welsh or English language.

The survey population included 1438 interviews with households that had participated in the 2004 research; the remaining 2633 household interviews were generated as a random sample. The number of interviews undertaken in each authority was calculated according to the size of its resident population.

Following collation and initial cross-tabulation by GfK NOP Social Research, the data were analysed by the WRO research team. As well as providing findings for rural Wales as a whole, the report highlights, where appropriate, variations according to gender, age, income, social class, geography, length of residence, economic activity and employment status, household tenure, and nationality.

## FINDINGS

### Demographics and Migration

As in the 2004 report the 2007 survey found evidence of considerable population stability in rural Wales, together with elements of population change. For example, 28% of respondents had lived in their present property for more than 20 years, 51% for between 5 and 20 years, and 21% for less than 5 years.

Of those respondents who had not always lived in the same property, 41% had relocated locally, 6% had moved from elsewhere in rural Wales, 17% had moved from elsewhere in Wales, and 36% had relocated from outside of Wales.

### Household Structure

The survey indicated that 38% of households in rural Wales were two-person households, a quarter contained a single person, and 38% had three or more people. In terms of tenure, 47% of households owned their properties outright, 35% were owned with a mortgage, 7% were rented privately, and 8% were socially rented.

### Community

The strength of local communities in rural Wales was evident from the survey, with 82% of respondents considering themselves members of the local community and 65% feeling safe living in their community. In addition, 30% of all respondents lived less than one mile from the nearest member of their family.

### Welsh Language

With regard to the Welsh language, 18% of respondents spoke Welsh fluently, which was slightly less than in 2004. However, at 47%, considerably more spoke a few words or sentences.

### Well being and welfare

Quality of life was considered to be good or very good by 92% of respondents.

A key factor in well being and welfare is household income. A relatively high proportion of respondents withheld income details. Of those respondents who provided details, 18% had annual household incomes of less than £10K, 31% had £10K - £21K, 39% had £21K - £52K, and 12% had more than £52K. In total, 46% of respondents were receiving benefits.

At 85%, most of the respondents claimed to be either comfortable or coping on their present income.

With regard to poverty in rural Wales, 43% of respondents considered that people in their local area were living in poverty. Unemployed people and older people were perceived to be the groups most likely to be living in poverty.

### Local services

Generally, respondents had positive perceptions of their local services. For example, 76% rated the Post Office as good, 67% the NHS, 66% schools, 65% food shops and 64% banks and building societies. Those living in towns were more likely to rate the quality of food shops, banks and building societies, and leisure facilities as good.

The service with the lowest rating was public transport, with 26% of respondents considering this service poor. However, there were significant differences in response

between locations. Public transport was rated 'good' by 45% of respondents living in towns. By contrast, 44% of those living in a property or farm in the country rated public transport as 'poor'.

The next lowest rated service was the police; 16% of respondents stating that policing in their area was 'poor'. Respondents in towns tended to be more satisfied with their police service.

## Employment

The survey highlighted that a quarter of respondents had experienced difficulties in finding suitable employment. Younger respondents (aged 16-34 years) were most likely to have experienced such difficulties. Of those in work, 38% were in full-time employment, 12% were working part-time, and 8% were self-employed. Higher proportions of men than women were in full time employment. This situation was reversed for those in part-time employment with four times as many women than men in such work. Levels of self-employment were higher among men and people living on farms and in smaller rural settlements.

Two thirds of people aged over 16 years in the households surveyed were economically active. The unemployment rate was 3%. Other employment related findings indicated that 30% of respondents were retired, and 13% of those surveyed had never had a paid job.

In terms of employment sectors, the Service sector dominated at 77%. Taken together, Public administration, Education and Health and Social Work accounted for 39% of employment. Agriculture, hunting and forestry continued to decline in importance, providing 4% of jobs compared with 6% in the 2004 survey. Of respondents in work, 32% were employed by small private enterprises (firms employing less than 24 people), 30% were in medium and large private enterprises, and a third were employed by public sector bodies.

Of those respondents in paid employment, 11% worked at home and 34% travelled five miles or less. However, 29% travelled more than 10 miles to work. In addition, 85% used private motorised transport to travel to work.

## Environment

In recent years issues concerning the environment, and the effects that human activities have on it, have become more important in rural Wales. Rural Wales's

landscape qualities and wider natural resources mean that many environmental issues have potential significance for people living there. The survey explored how respondents perceived their natural environment, their attitudes to emerging and significant environmental issues, and how they were addressing some of these issues.

Slightly more than half (53%) of respondents did not perceive any change in the quality of the local natural environment, over the last five years, 11% pointed to some deterioration, and 32% considered that it had improved to some degree.

At 92% the large majority of respondents had considered taking some action towards alleviating potential harmful effects on the environment.

For those 80% of respondents with access to recycling facilities, use was high at around 90%. Substantial proportions of respondents were concerned about global warming (85%) and energy shortages (79%). A smaller proportion of 58% was concerned about GM foods.

Use of the more common methods of energy saving was relatively high. For example, 82% of respondents had loft insulation and 46% had cavity wall insulation. In addition, 87% used energy saving light bulbs and 85% had double glazing. Use of alternative power generation was much lower at 1% of respondents for wind power and 3% for solar panels.

At 90% most households had a car or other form of motorised transport, with 52% of households owning two or more vehicles. About one third of respondents with vehicles stated that their dependency on their vehicles had increased over the last five years, while 60% stated that their dependency had remained the same.

Slightly more than one quarter of households with vehicles recorded an annual mileage of more than 20,000.

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## For Further information

The full report, Household Survey 2008 is published by the WRO.

It is available free as a download from: [www.walesruralobservatory.org.uk](http://www.walesruralobservatory.org.uk)

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