

Rural Scotland Key Facts 2021: Highlights

February 2021



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Introduction

This is a summary of the Rural Scotland Key Facts 2021 publication. It compares and contrasts circumstances in remote and accessible rural areas to the rest of Scotland.

The majority of indicators included in the publication report data for 2019. Only the indicator on residential property sales reflects the impact that the coronavirus pandemic has had. For the other indicators reporting 2020 data, the data were either collected before the full impact of the pandemic started to be felt or for the median pay figures they were not impacted due to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

As with the full Rural Scotland Key Facts 2021 publication this summary is split into three sections:

- [People and Communities](#)
- [Services and Lifestyle](#)
- [Economy and Enterprise](#)



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Definition of Rural Scotland

Rural Scotland is defined as settlements with a population of less than 3,000. A settlement is defined to be a group of high density postcodes whose combined population rounds to 500 people or more. They are separated by low density postcodes.

By analysing drive times to larger settlements we can divide rural Scotland into:

Accessible rural: those with a less than 30 minute drive time to the nearest settlement with a population of 10,000 or more;

Remote rural: those with a greater than 30 minute drive time to the nearest settlement with a population of 10,000 or more.

These definitions form part of the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification.

The latest version of the classification is the [Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2016](#)

The Rural Scotland Key Facts combines the first four categories of the 6-fold classification into the **rest of Scotland**. The rest of Scotland therefore includes large urban areas, other urban areas, accessible small towns and remote small towns.



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People and Communities



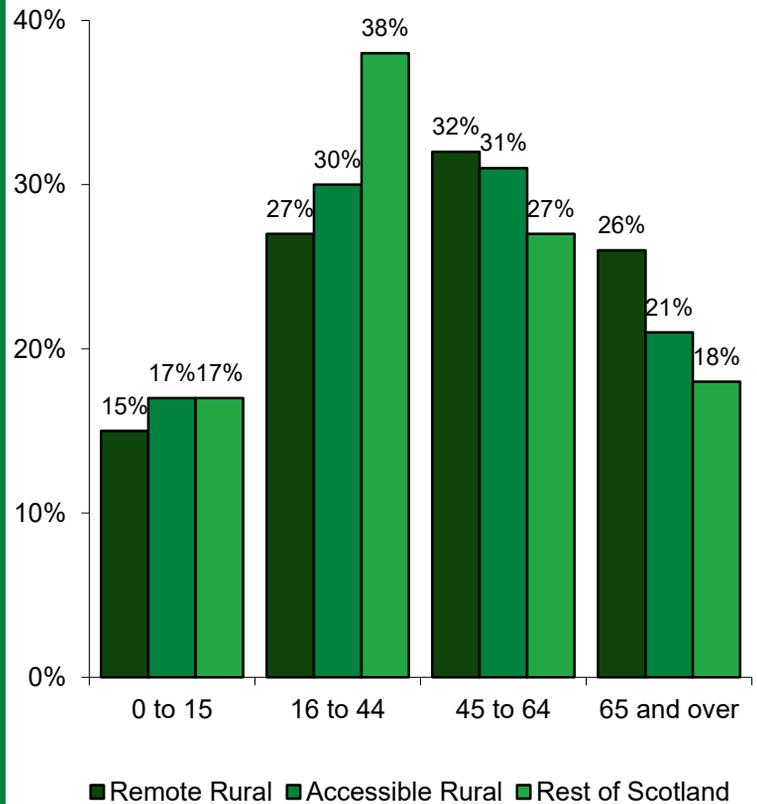
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Population growth is faster in rural Scotland

- Just over 5.46 million people live in Scotland, with over 930,000 of them living in rural areas. With around two thirds living in accessible rural areas and a third living in remote.
- The proportion of the Scottish population living in rural areas has remained at 17% since 2011. While rural areas make up 98% of the Scottish land mass.
- Since 2011 the Scottish population has increased by 3% but the population of accessible rural areas has increased by 8%. This compares to increases of less than 0.1% in remote rural areas.
- Net migration rates in 2018-19 were highest in accessible rural areas (1.3%), compared to 0.5% in the rest of Scotland and 0.4% in remote rural areas.

Age distribution of population



There is a higher proportion of older people in rural Scotland, particularly in remote rural areas



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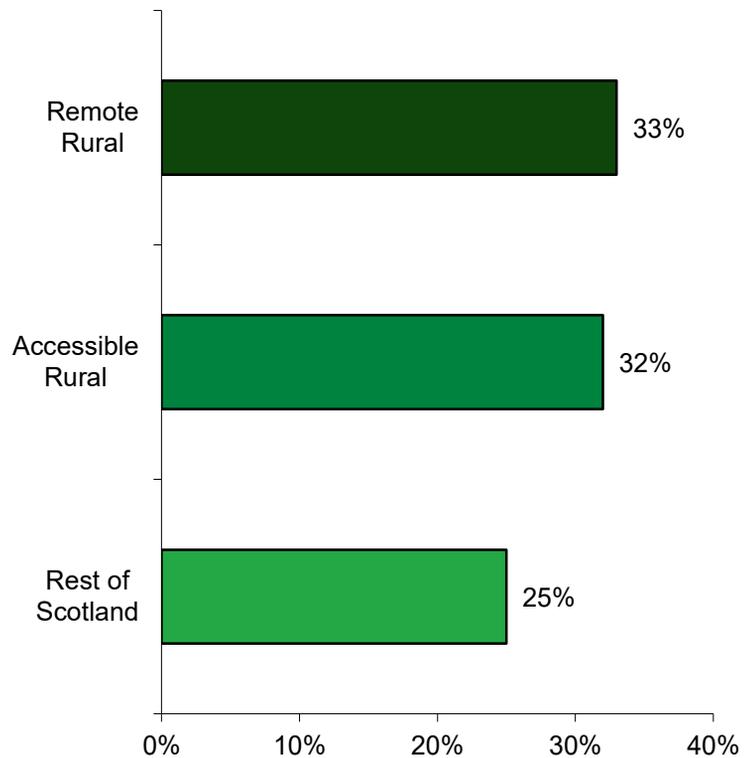
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Demographics

Rural areas are a 'very good' place to live

- People living in rural areas are more likely to describe their neighbourhood as a 'very good' place to live, 80% in remote rural areas and 70% in accessible rural areas. This compares to 54% in rest of Scotland.
- Over half of people who live in remote rural areas feel 'very strongly' that they belong to their immediate neighbourhood. In accessible rural areas the proportion is 39% and in the rest of Scotland it is 33%.
- A lower proportion of people in rural areas have experienced neighbourhood problems. Over half of people in rural areas have experienced no problems but in the rest of Scotland it is 43%.
- A higher proportion of people in rural areas think they can influence decisions affecting their local area than in the rest of Scotland.

Organiser/volunteer in the past 12 months



More people in rural areas have given their time to help as an organiser/volunteer in the past 12 months



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Neighbourhood and Community

Services and Lifestyle



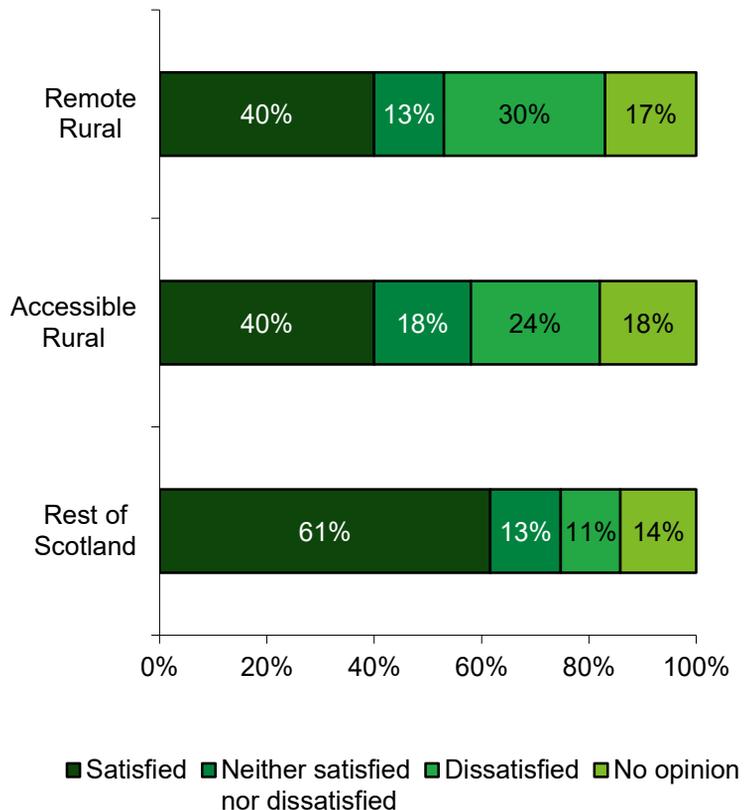
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Rural households are less likely connect to the internet using superfast broadband

- Nearly 90% of all households in Scotland have home internet access. Around a third of household in rural areas connect to the internet using superfast broadband, this compares to more than half of households in the rest of Scotland.
- Those in rural areas are less likely to live within 15 minutes drive of key services, particularly those in remote rural areas.
- People in rural areas are more likely to drive to work/education. Rural households are more likely to spend over £100 per month on fuel for their cars than households in the rest of Scotland.
- Children in rural areas are more likely to travel to school by bus than by any other mode of transport, whereas children in the rest of Scotland are more likely to walk or cycle.

Level of satisfaction with the quality of public transport services delivered



People in rural areas are less satisfied with the quality of the public transport services delivered



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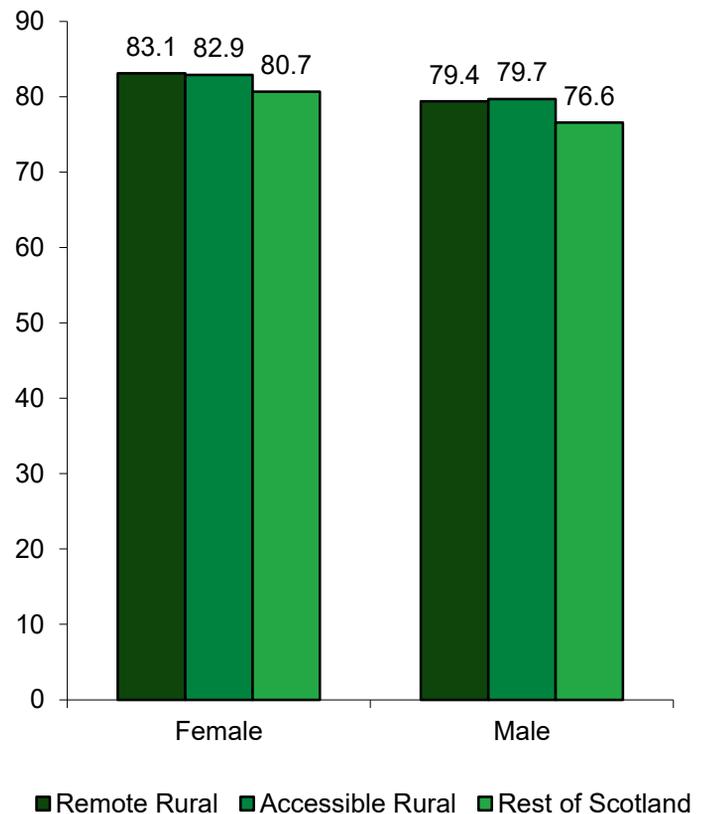
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**Access and Convenience of
Services & Travel Patterns**

School leavers in remote rural areas are more likely to go straight into employment

- School leavers in remote rural areas (37%) are more likely to go straight into employment than in both accessible rural areas (30%) and the rest of Scotland (27%).
- Residents of accessible rural areas (33%) are most likely to have a degree level qualification or equivalent compared to the rest of Scotland (31%) and remote rural areas (26%).
- The rates of emergency hospital admissions are lower in rural Scotland. The rates of cancer hospital admissions are highest in remote rural areas but lowest in accessible rural areas.
- Attendance at cultural events is lowest in remote rural areas but participation in cultural events is highest in remote rural areas.

Life expectancy at birth



Life expectancy at birth is both higher in rural areas than in the rest of Scotland and for females compared to males



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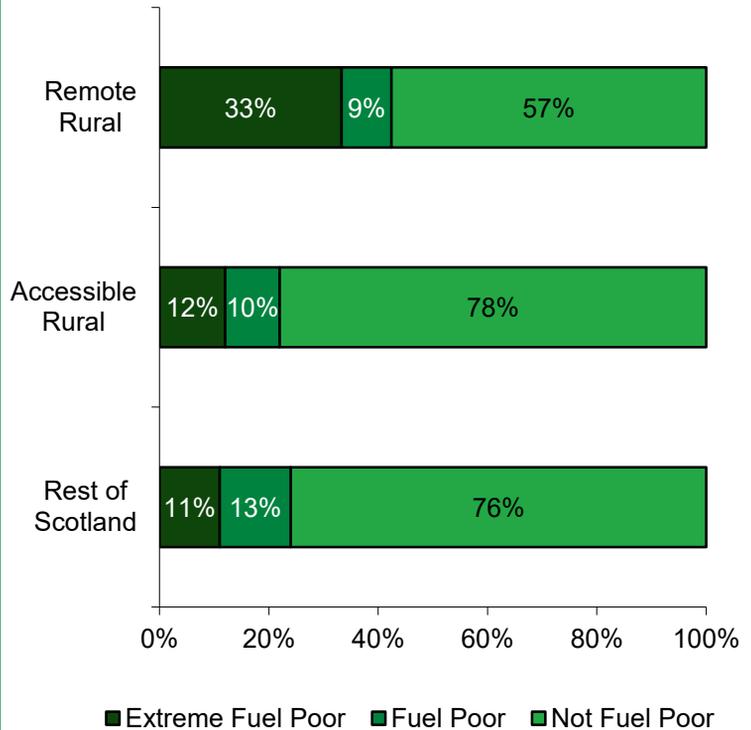
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**Education, Health &
Cultural Engagement**

Homes are more expensive in rural Scotland

- The mean residential property price increased across Scotland. It was highest in accessible rural areas (£228,566), followed by remote rural areas (£198,908) and the rest of Scotland (£171,362).
- The overall number of residential property sales in 2020 was impacted by COVID-19 restrictions and decreased.
- In both remote rural and accessible rural areas, 93% of properties are houses or bungalows, with about half of these being detached. More people own their own home in rural Scotland.
- Rural Scotland has less energy efficient housing than the rest of Scotland. In remote rural areas, the median energy efficient rating is 53 compared to 61 in accessible rural areas and 68 in the rest of Scotland.

Fuel poverty across Scotland



In remote rural areas 33% of households are in extreme fuel poverty compared to 12% in accessible rural areas and 11% in the rest of Scotland



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Housing

Economy and Enterprise



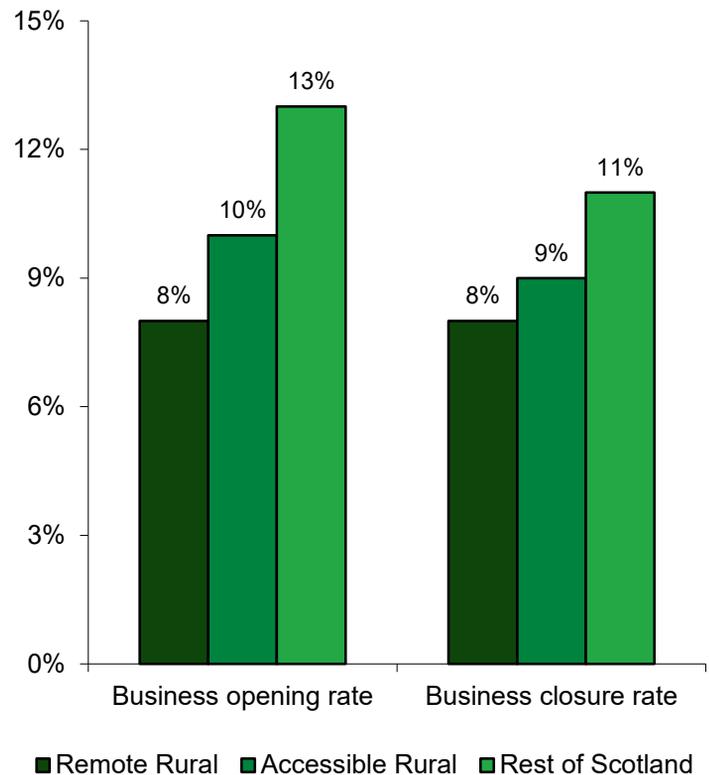
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Micro businesses are the biggest employer in rural areas

- In remote rural areas 36% of employees work in Micro businesses (0-9 employees) and 29% in accessible rural areas, whereas in the rest of Scotland 13% of employees work in Micro businesses.
- The public sector accounts for 17% of employment in both remote rural areas and accessible rural areas. This compares to 23% in the rest of Scotland.
- In remote rural areas the largest private sector employers are the 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing', 'Accommodation and food services' and the 'Financial & other activities' sectors (15% each).
- The largest private sector employers in accessible rural areas are the 'Financial & other activities' (17%), 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' (12%) and 'Wholesale, retail and repair' (12%) sectors.

Business opening and closure rates



The rate of business openings is lower in rural areas compared to the rest of Scotland, although the rate of business closures is also lower



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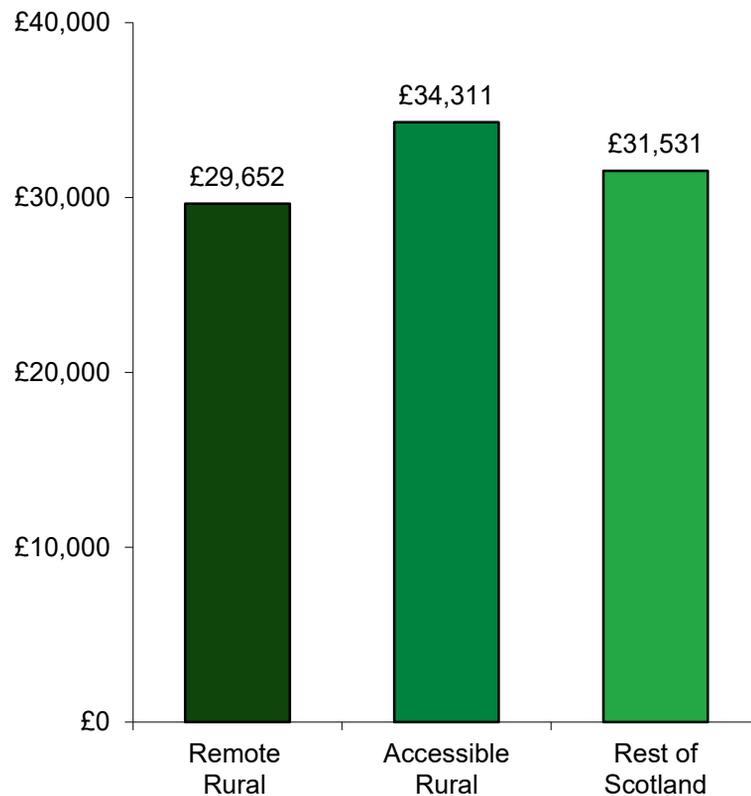
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Industry & Business

Rates of employment are higher in rural areas

- Rates of employment and economic activity are higher in rural areas. People who are employed or looking for work are economically active.
- The unemployment rate is broadly similar across all areas of Scotland. It is highest in the rest of Scotland (4%), followed by remote rural areas (3%) and then accessible rural areas (2%).
- More people in rural areas are self-employed, more so in remote rural areas than accessible rural areas. Homeworking and having a second job are also more prevalent in rural areas.
- The most common income bracket for a household in both remote rural areas and the rest of Scotland is the £10,001 to £20,000 category. In accessible rural areas it is the £40,001 and over category.

Median annual pay for full-time employees



Median annual pay for full-time employees is highest in accessible rural areas but lowest in remote rural areas



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**Economic Activity,
Earnings & Income**

Data Sources

The Rural Scotland Key Facts presents a collation of statistics from a range of surveys and administrative databases:

- [Annual Population Survey for Scotland](#)
- [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings for Scotland](#)
- [Business demography, UK](#)
- [Businesses in Scotland](#)
- [Community Ownership in Scotland](#)
- [Destination of School Leaver Destinations](#)
- [Hospital Admissions](#)
- [National Records of Scotland](#)
- [Residential Property Sales](#)
- [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey](#)
- [Scottish Household Survey](#)
- [Scottish House Condition Survey](#)
- [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#)

Further information can be found in in the Sources section of the [Rural Scotland Key Facts 2021](#).

For more information on the Rural Scotland Key Facts please contact: RuralStatistics@gov.scot



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