

Key Rural Issues, Northern Ireland 2020



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Key Findings

- Population growth in rural areas is outstripping that in urban areas
- Young people from rural areas leave school with higher qualifications, and are more likely to enter higher education than their urban peers
- Rural people of working age are more likely to be in full-time employment, and less likely to be economically inactive than those living in towns and cities
- On average, public sector earnings are higher in urban areas, while private sector earnings in rural and urban workplaces are similar
- Workers who live in rural areas tend to be more highly skilled, and enjoy higher job satisfaction than those who live in towns and cities
- Workers from rural areas commute for almost one and a half times longer than urban workers, and travel on average over 400 miles more annually to get to work
- Rural workers (91%) are also much more likely to use private transport to commute than those from urban areas (74%)
- More than half (58%) of NI businesses are in rural areas, yet rural businesses account for less than a quarter (20%) of employees and around a quarter (25%) of total business turnover
- Rural businesses predominantly engage in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and construction, with urban businesses more widely spread across a variety of sectors
- Just 18% of all overnight tourism visits to NI, and only 14% of associated expenditure took place in rural locations
- Broadband speed and availability, though improving, is still much lower in rural than in urban areas
- Access to public transport in rural areas is much lower than that in towns and cities - journey times to key services by car are on average twice as long for rural dwellers
- People living in rural areas are consistently more likely to rate their happiness and life satisfaction as high, and their health as good
- Life expectancy is notably higher in rural areas – but rural dwellers experience longer waiting times for emergency services than their urban counterparts
- People from rural areas are less likely to directly experience several crime types than those in urban areas
- The number of recorded crimes with a racist, sectarian or homophobic motivation has increased in rural areas from 2018-19, despite a decline in urban areas
- Similar proportions of urban and rural households are in relative or absolute poverty. Levels of poverty in households in rural areas distant from Belfast are higher than those of households in urban areas
- Rural pensioners are nearly twice as likely to experience relative or absolute poverty than their urban counterparts
- Levels of home ownership are higher in rural than in urban areas (80% to 63%), with house prices in rural areas higher on average than in towns and cities.

Northern Ireland Urban-Rural Statistics

● = Urban ● = Mixed ● = Rural

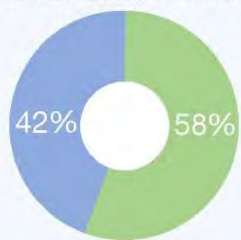
Population Growth, 2001-2018



Job Quality 2018



Businesses 2019



Tourism Expenditure 2018



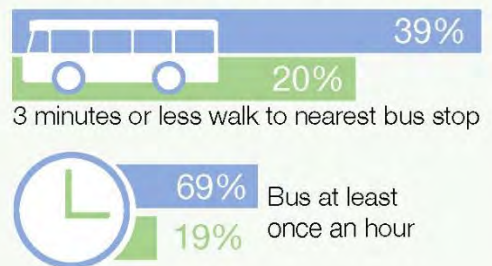
Median Annual Salary 2019



2016-18



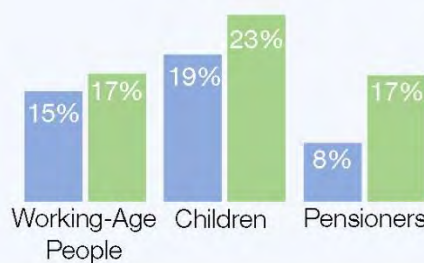
Public Transport 2016-18



Coverage of Superfast Broadband 2019



People in Absolute Poverty 2018/19



Introduction

More than a third (36%) of Northern Ireland's (NI) population lives in a rural area. Despite similarities in many aspects of urban and rural life, there are also challenges which tend to be more pronounced in rural areas outside of Belfast.

The nature of rural industry and employment differs from that of towns and cities. Difficulties with access to services, and issues with connectivity, social and digital, tend to have a disproportionate impact on rural dwellers.

The cost of living also tends to be higher in rural areas, and rural households are more likely to experience fuel poverty. Despite the unique challenges presented by rural life, those living in rural areas on average enjoy a better self-reported quality of life than their urban counterparts, in terms of health, happiness and life satisfaction.

Key Rural Issues – Background and Aim

A considerable amount of data is regularly collected across Government Departments, from both survey data and administrative sources. This publication will present relevant, already publicly available data from a unique urban/rural perspective, in order to highlight key urban/rural differences and disparities across a range of domains.

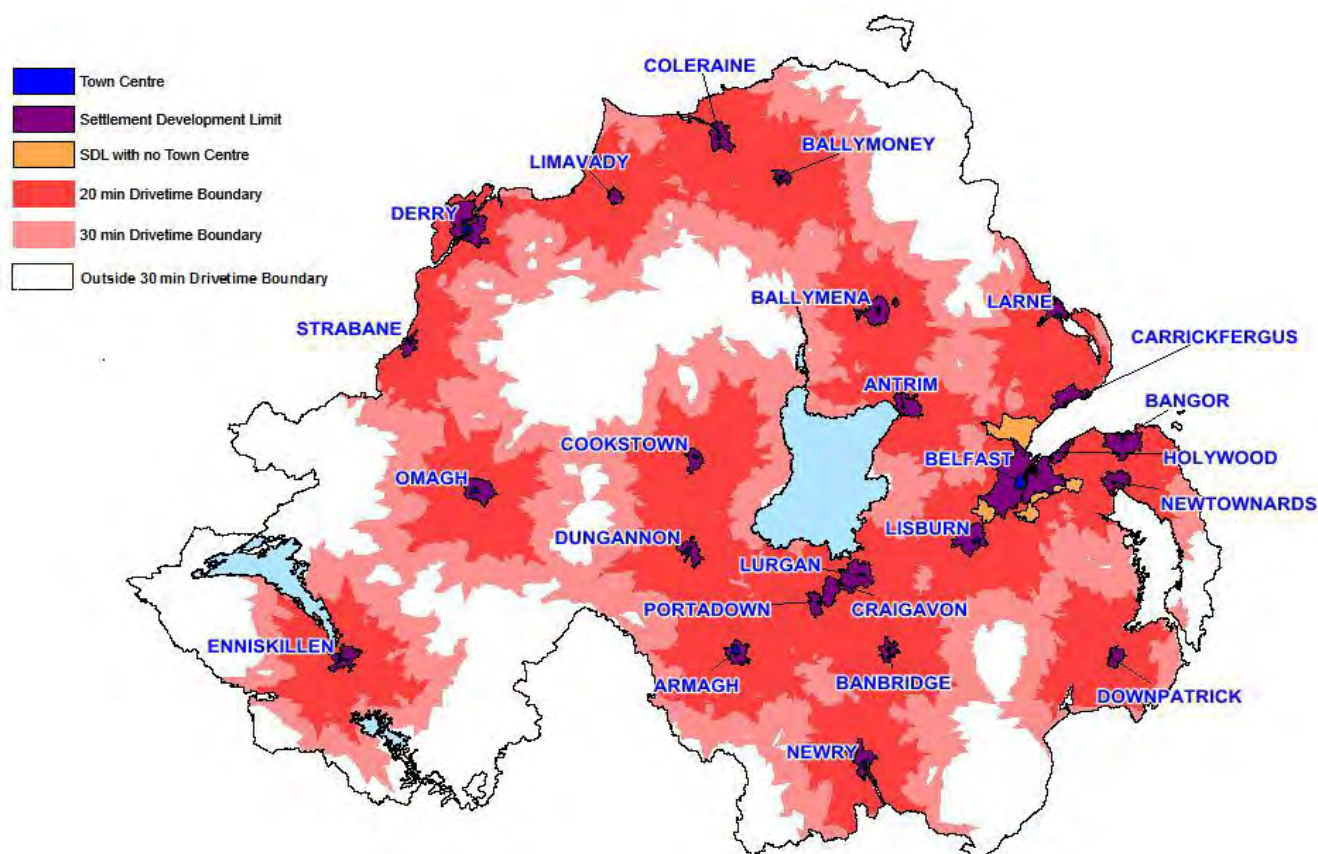
In doing so, the publication will provide a robust evidence base to inform the future direction of rural policy in NI, to underpin the Rural Needs Act (2016), and to support the equitable treatment of rural communities in policies and programmes across Government.

The domains explored in this publication, in terms of urban/rural comparison, include:

- Population
- Education
- Employment
- Industry
- Travel and Tourism
- Crime and Poverty
- Connectivity and access to services
- Health, Wellbeing and quality of life
- Household Income, Housing and Poverty

Urban/Rural - Populations and Definition

Figure 1: NI Urban and Rural areas with 20 and 30 minute 'drive time' boundaries from settlements with a population of 10,000 or more



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Source: Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2015

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/review-of-the-statistical-classification-and-delineation-of-settlements-march-2015%20%281%29.pdf>

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) carried out a review of settlement classification in 2015¹, which recommended a default urban/rural boundary at a population level of 5,000.

All settlements with a population of less than 5,000, and areas of open countryside, were defined as rural. The classification also incorporated measures of distance to settlements with a population of 10,000 or more. These measures were intended as proxies for accessibility, as previous research had indicated that towns of this size are large enough to

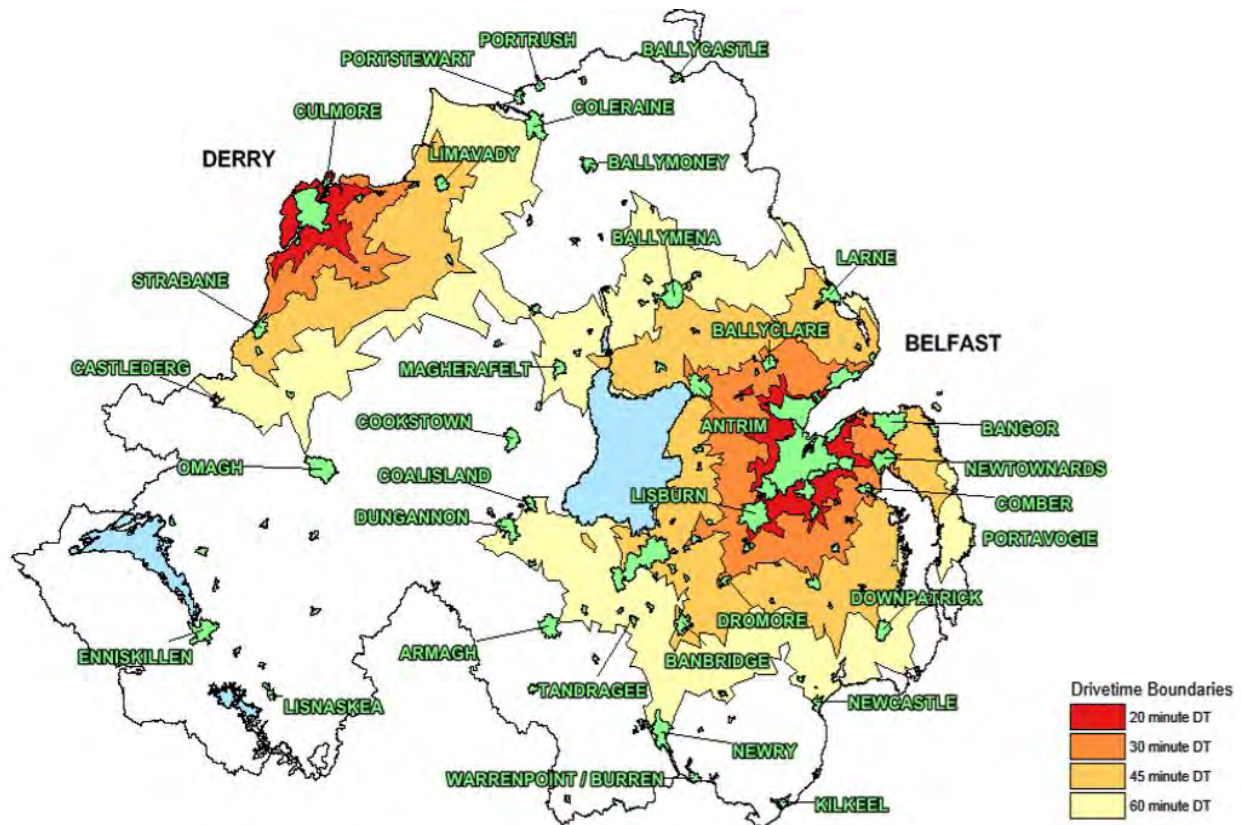
¹ Review of the statistical classification and delineation of Settlements, NISRA 2015

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/review-of-the-statistical-classification-and-delineation-of-settlements-march-2015.pdf>

provide access to all key services, and that rural areas in their vicinity are likely to thrive. Market towns are likely to have connections with city regions, and linkages between urban and rural areas are beneficial to both.²

Figure 1 shows rural and urban areas of NI as defined by the review, as well as 20 and 30 minute drive time boundaries to urban settlements, above the 10,000 population threshold. In 2018, 41% of the rural population in NI live further than 20 minutes from a settlement of this size.

Figure 2: Drive-time boundaries to Belfast and Derry/Londonderry



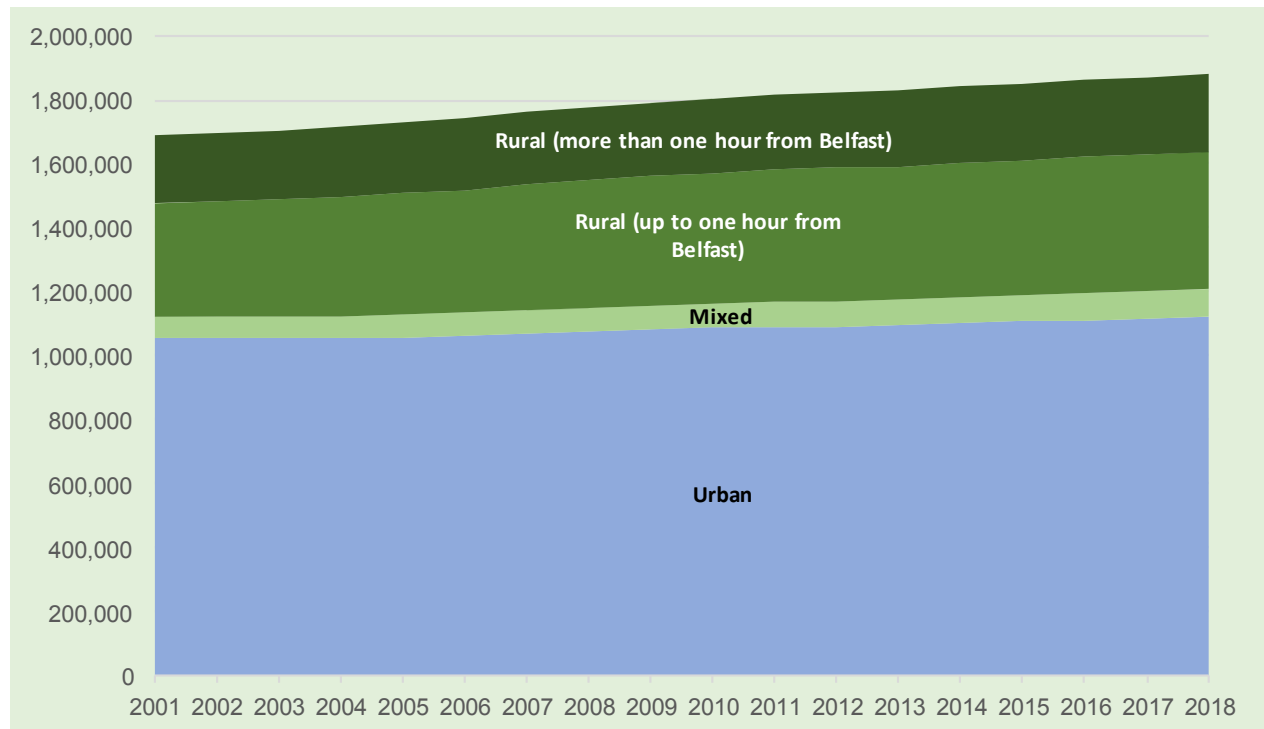
© Crown copyright and database rights NIMA MOU207.2 Source: Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2015 <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/review-of-the-statistical-classification-and-delineation-of-settlements-march-2015%20%281%29.pdf>

The 2015 settlement classification also incorporated specific drive times to Belfast and Londonderry, as the two major urban centres in NI (Figure 2). Belfast is regarded as the main regional economic driver, most important employment centre, and focus for

² Rural Policy and Evidence. A report prepared for the Rural Policy Division, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Sally Shortall, QUB, 2010

administration and commerce in NI³. More than a third (36%) of the rural population in NI live more than a 60 minute drive from Belfast.

Figure 3: Urban and Rural Population Growth, 2001-2018



Source: NISRA Mid-year Population Estimates 2018

<http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/Theme.aspx?themeNumber=74&themeName=Population>

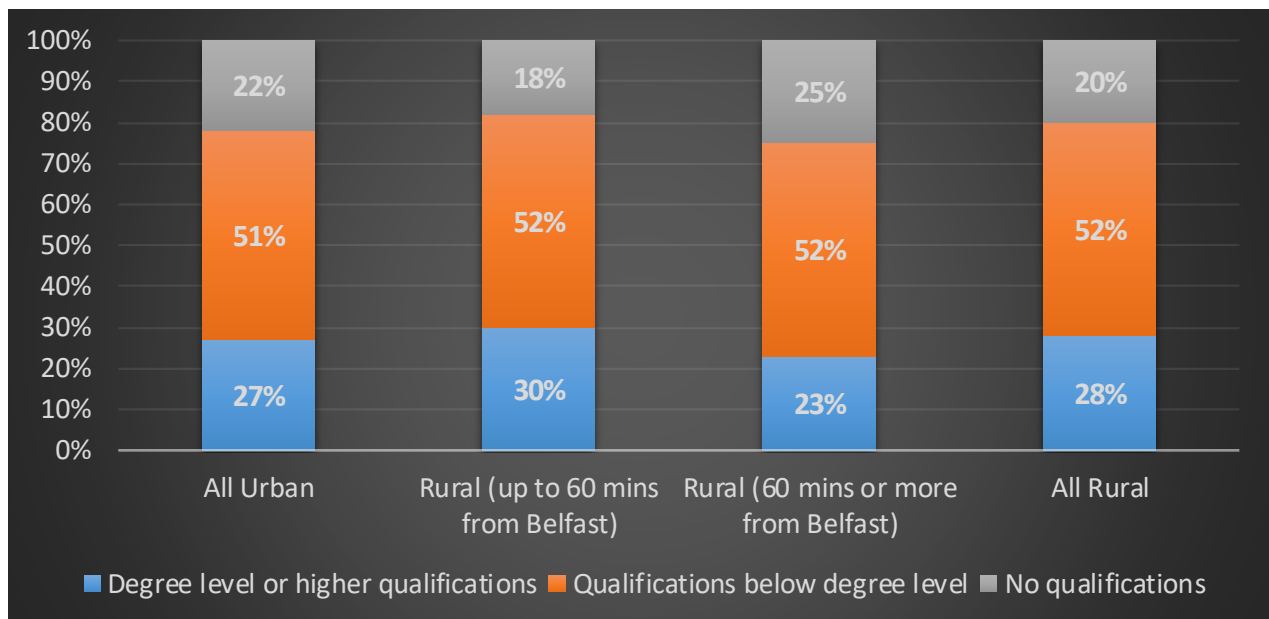
Under the 2015 settlement classification definition, more than 80% of the NI land mass is rural. Although more than a third of NI’s population lives in a rural area, the rate of population growth in rural areas is higher than in urban areas.

Between 2001 and 2018, the population of rural areas rose by 16%, compared to an increase of just 6% for urban areas. As a result, the rural share of the overall NI population grew from 34% to 36%. Areas with fastest growth were those close to urban centres, either in mixed rural/urban areas (32%) or less than an hour’s commute from Belfast (21%).

³ Regional Development Strategy 2035, Department for Regional Development 2010
<https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/rds2035.pdf>

Education

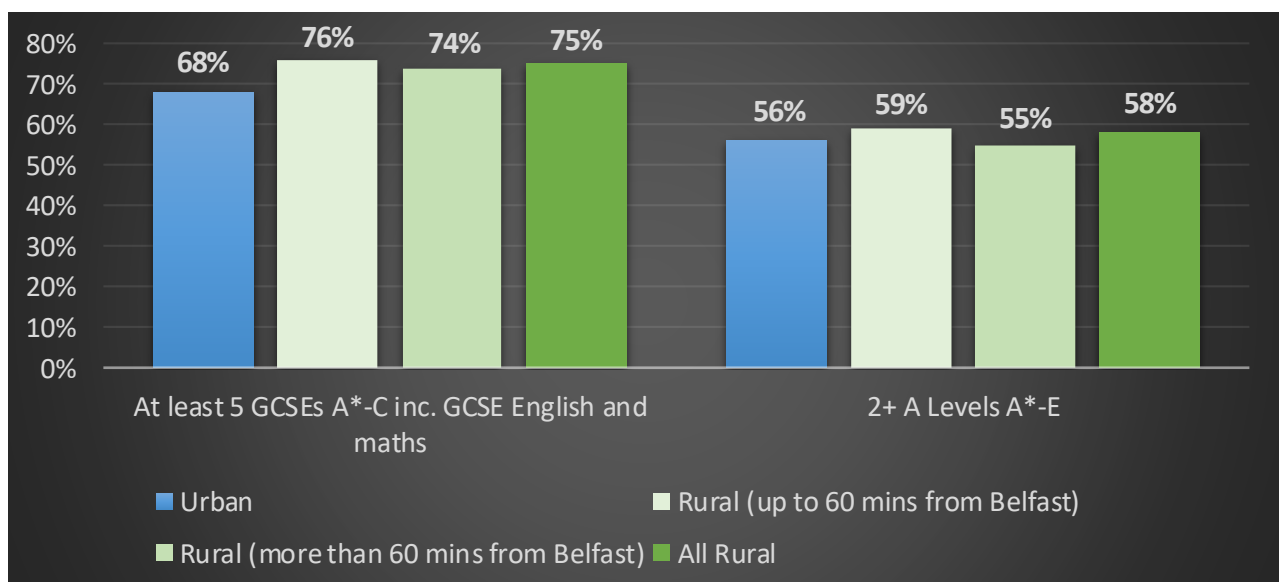
Figure 4: Highest Educational Qualification (persons aged 18-69), Urban/Rural Comparison, 2018/19



Source: Continuous Household Survey (NISRA), 2019

The adult populations of rural and urban areas are very similar in terms of overall educational attainment. However, there are clear intra-rural differences in qualification levels. Rural dwellers who live more than an hour's drive from Belfast are less likely to have achieved degree level or higher qualifications (23%) than their urban counterparts (30%), and were more likely to have no formal qualifications (25% compared to 18%).

Figure 5: Qualifications of School Leavers by Pupil Residence, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2017/18

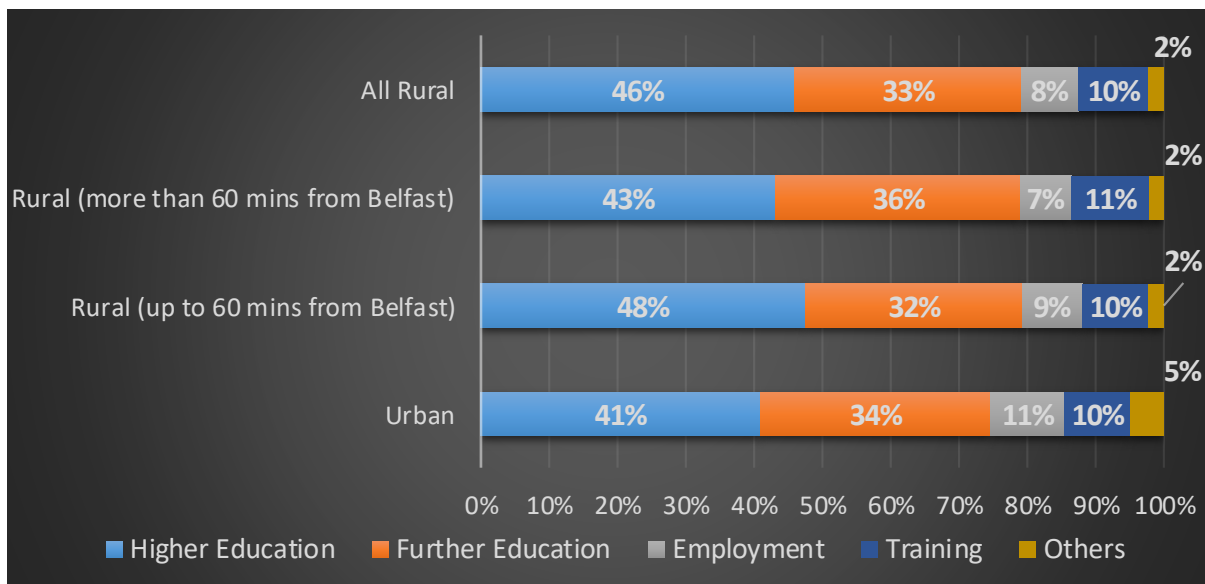


Source: NI School Leavers Survey, Department of Education (DE), 2017-18

In 2017/18, GCSE students from rural areas were more academically successful, on average, than their urban counterparts. Around three quarters (75%) of students from rural areas left school with at least 5 GCSEs including English and Maths, compared to just over two thirds (68%) of students from urban areas (Figure 5).

Academic achievement at A-level was more consistent between the two groups. 58% of rural school leavers achieved two or more passes, compared to 56% of urban school leavers. The proportion of those living in rural areas close to Belfast who achieved qualifications at these levels was marginally higher than that of those living further away.

Figure 6: Destination of School Leavers by Pupil Residence, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2017/18

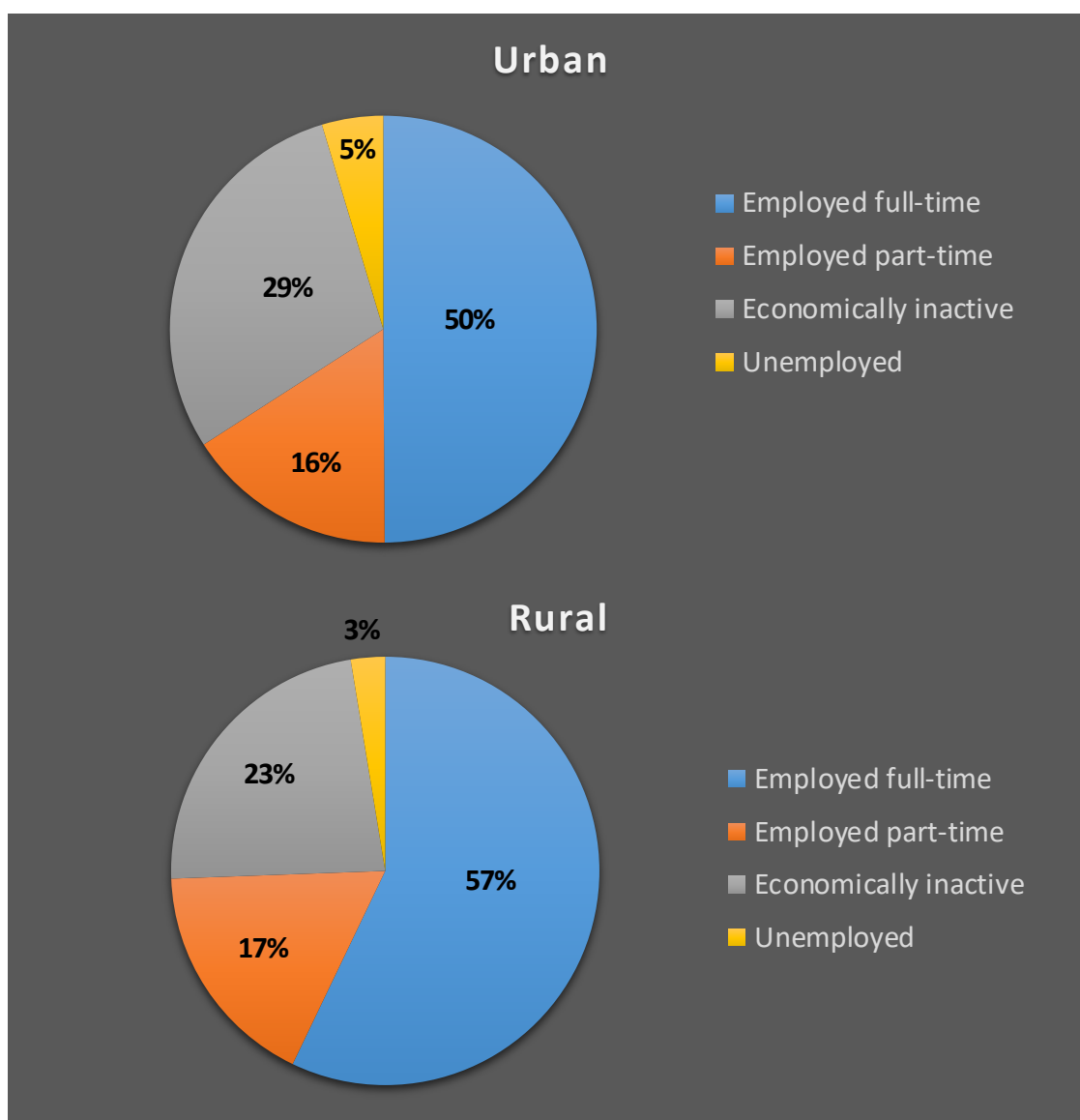


Source: NI School Leavers Survey, Department of Education (DE), 2017-18

In 2017/18, school leavers from rural areas are more likely than those from urban areas to enter higher education. Almost half (48%) of pupils living in rural areas within an hour of Belfast proceeded to higher education, compared with 43% of those in rural areas more distant from Belfast, and 41% of school leavers from urban areas.

Employment

Figure 7: Economic Activity Status of NI Working Age Population, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2018



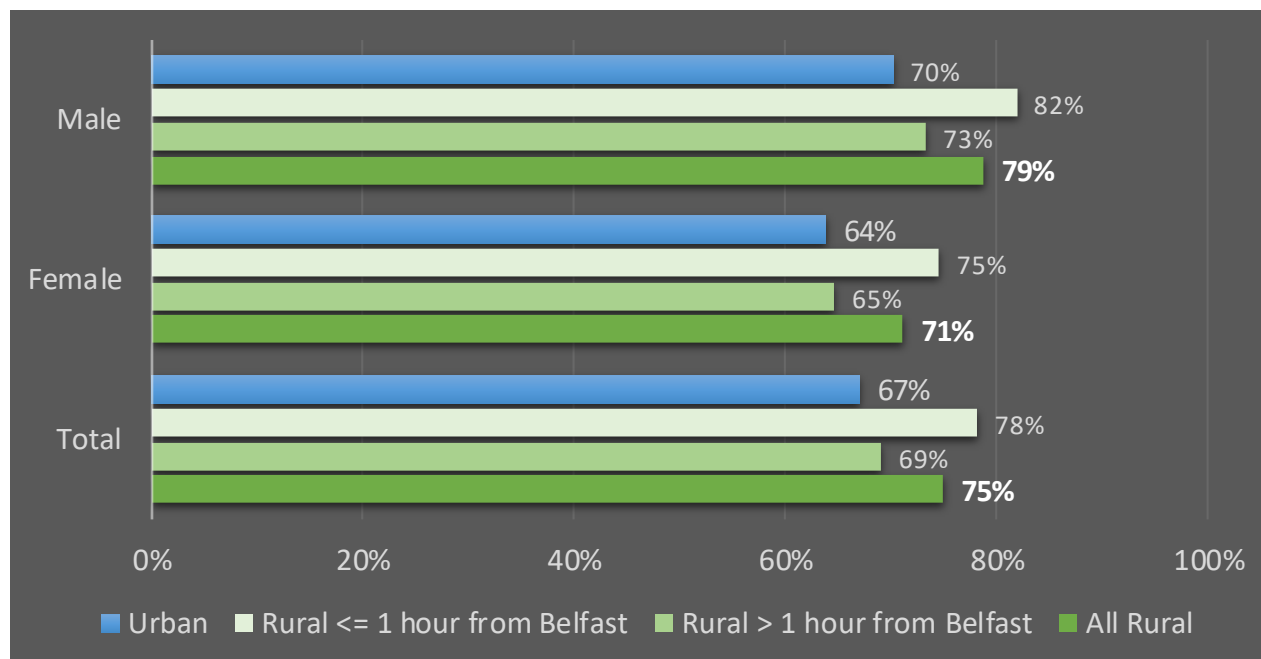
**Economic inactivity is defined as “people who are neither in employment nor unemployed as determined by the ILO measure. This group includes all those who are looking after a home, are long term sick or disabled, are students, or retired.”*

***Percentages may not sum due to rounding*

Source: NI Labour Force Survey, January-December 2018

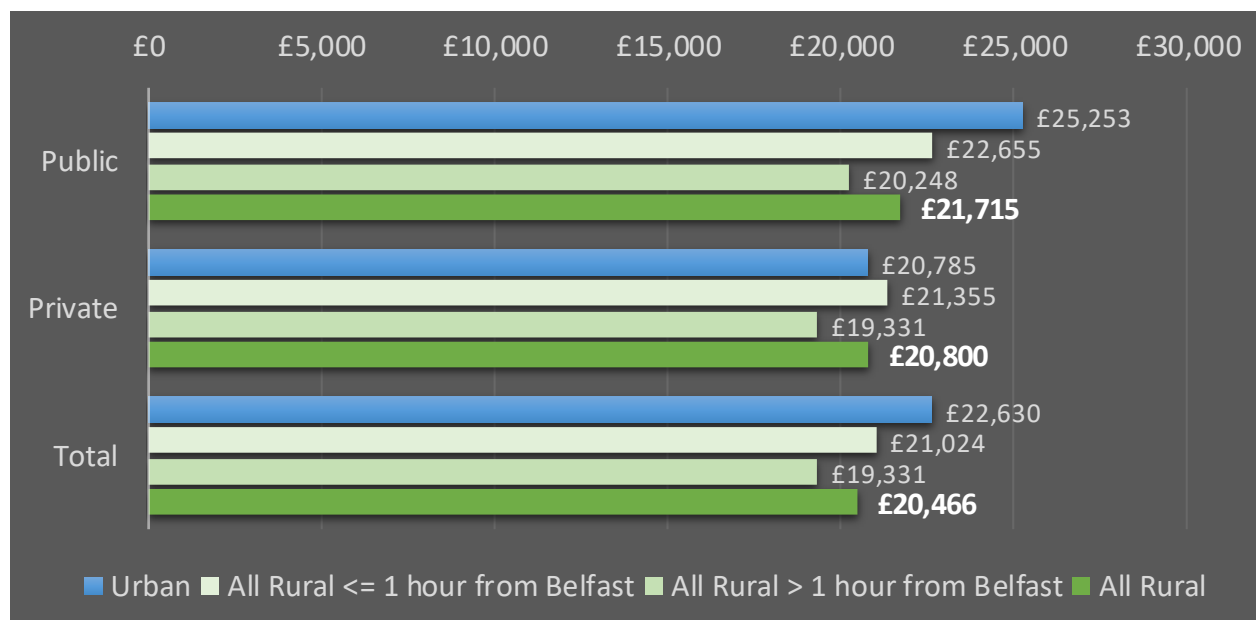
In 2018, people living in rural areas were more likely to be in employment, with around three quarters (74%) employed either full or part-time. Similarly, this group was less likely to be economically inactive compared to those living in urban areas (Figure 8). Overall employment levels for both men and women were higher in the rural than the urban population, and employment was highest among those living in rural areas within an hour's commute of Belfast (78%).

Figure 8: Percentage of Working Age Population in Employment by Sex, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2018



Source: NI Labour Force Survey, January-December 2018

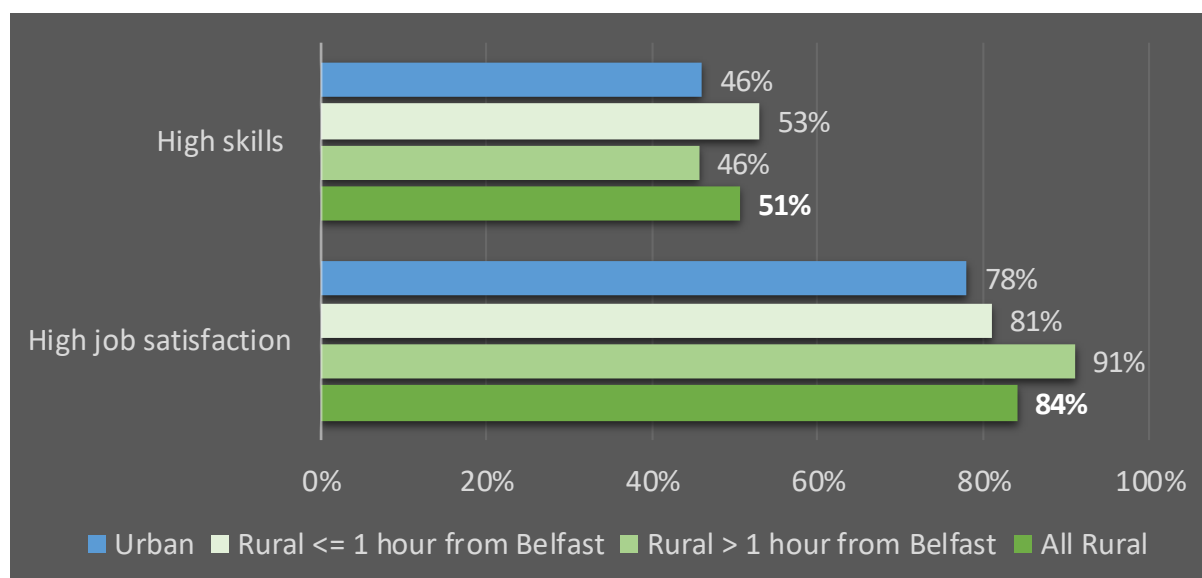
Figure 9: Median Annual Salary by Workplace Address/Sector, Urban/Rural/NI Comparison, 2019



Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2019, NISRA

In 2019, the average earnings of public sector workers were higher in urban than in rural areas, while for those in the private sector, the difference in median annual salaries in rural and urban workplaces was negligible (Figure 9). Those working in rural areas more than an hour's drive from Belfast have lowest average earnings of all, in either sector.

Figure 10: Job Skills and Job Satisfaction, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2018



Notes: Based on employee address. Skills level figures exclude self-employed and those who did not state a skills level. High job satisfaction defined as score of 7 out of 10 or above.

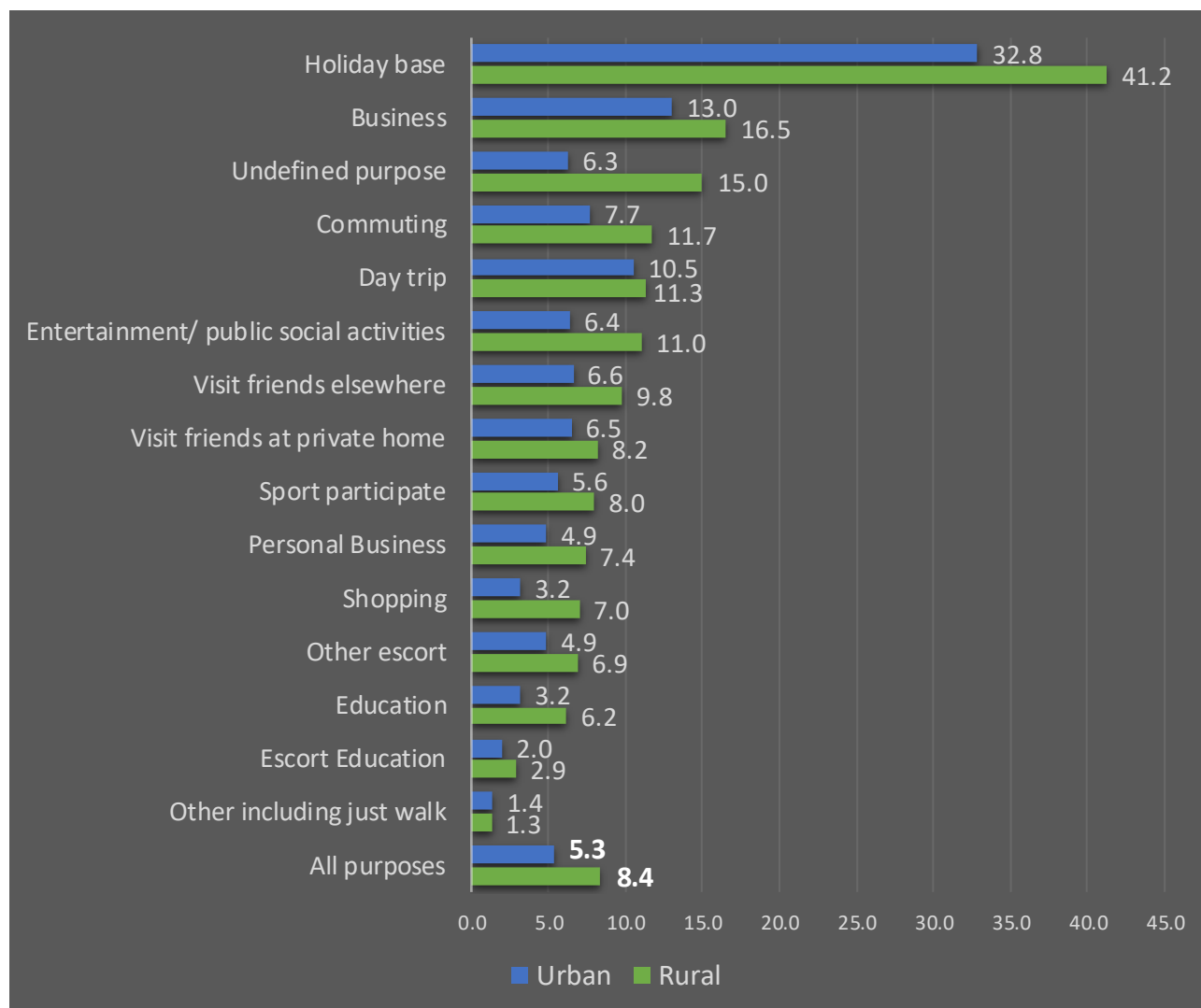
Source: NI Labour Force Survey, January-December 2018

Figure 10 illustrates the skill level of workers, and self-reported job satisfaction levels. On average, workers who live in rural areas are more likely to be highly skilled and more likely to report greater job satisfaction (84% of rural respondents reported high job satisfaction) than their urban counterparts (78%).

An overwhelming majority (91%) of those from rural areas more than an hour’s drive time from Belfast, reported high levels of job satisfaction.

It is important to note that this information is based on the home address rather than the work address of respondents. Workers may commute long distances for more highly skilled and better paid employment than is available locally - this data reflects the quality of jobs in areas where people work, rather than live.

Figure 11: Average Distance Travelled (miles) for Business and Leisure, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2016-18

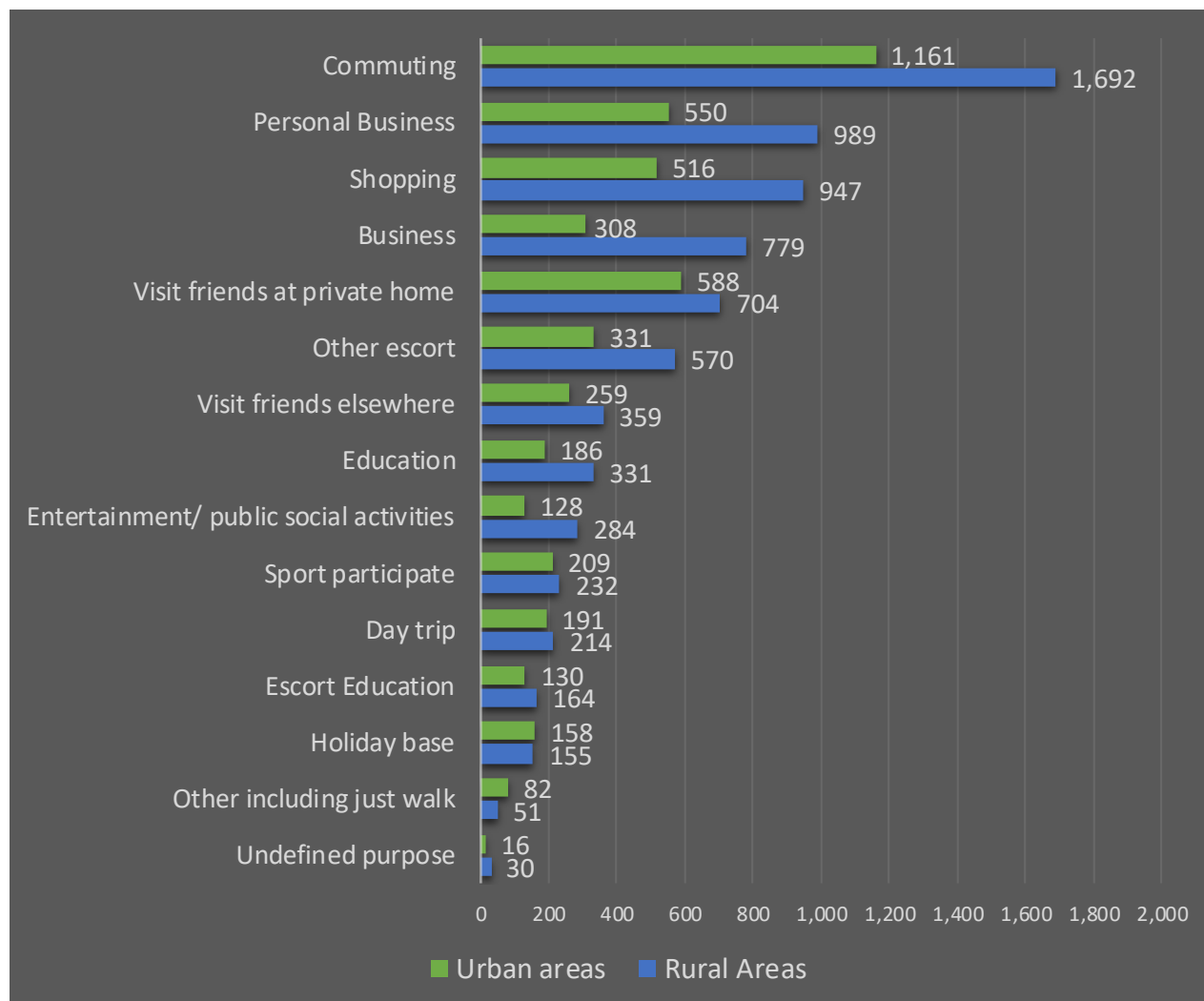


Source: Travel Survey for Northern Ireland (TSNI) 2016-2018, DfI

The Travel Survey NI for 2016-18 revealed that workers from rural areas had an average commute of around 50% further than workers in towns and cities (Figure 11), and travelled on average more than 500 additional miles per year to their workplace (Figure 12).

Technological advances have enabled some workers to minimise the impact of the daily commute and work from home, and for workers in more remote rural areas this might seem a particularly attractive option.

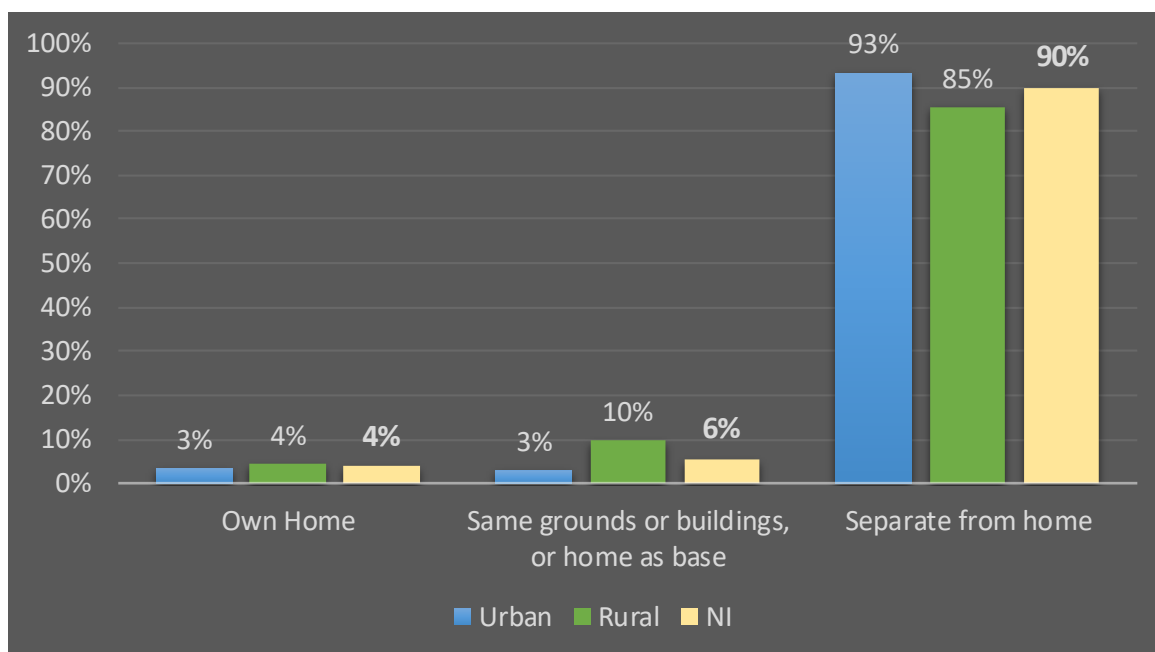
Figure 12: Total Miles Travelled (per person per year), by Journey Purpose, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2016-18



Source: Travel Survey for Northern Ireland (TSNI) 2016-2018, DfI

The 2019 UK Labour Force Survey revealed that only very small proportions of rural (4%) and urban (3%) employees in NI work at home (Figure 13) – however, this data is based on responses collected for the 2019 calendar year. It would be reasonable to assume that the 2020 figures will be influenced by the recent shift for many public and private sector workers to alternative working patterns, including home working, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

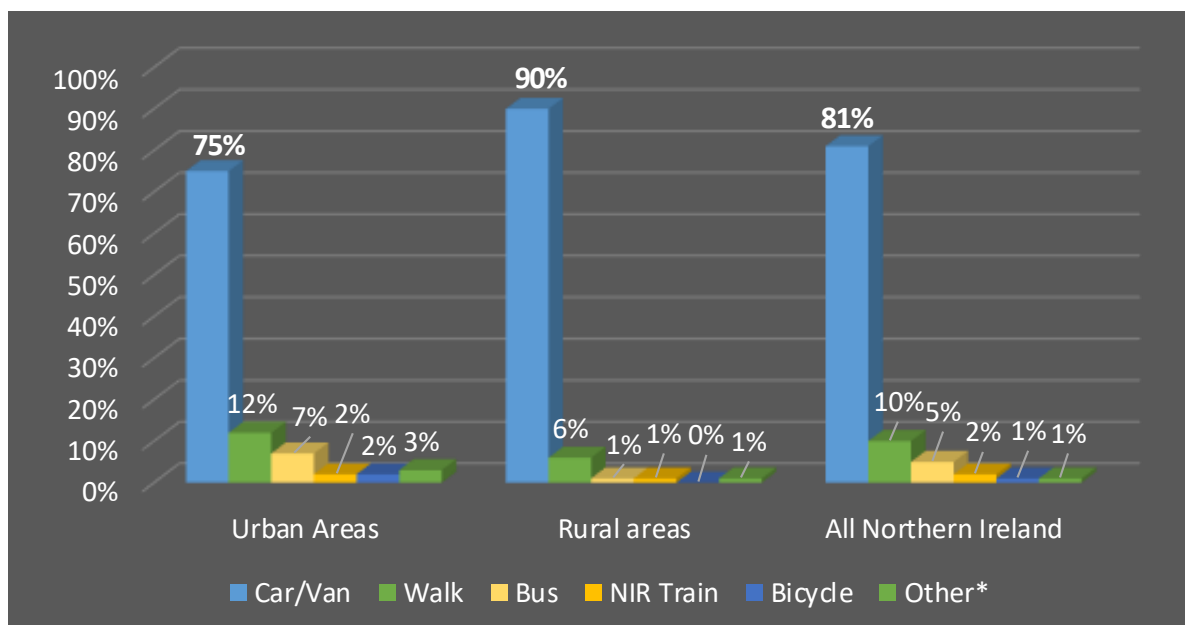
Figure 13: Physical Location of Main Job, Urban/Rural/NI Comparison, 2019



Note: Employed persons aged 16-64

Source: Labour Force Survey January-December 2019

Figure 14: Method of Travel to Work, Urban/Rural/NI Comparison, 2016-18



Notes: Respondents are those aged 16 and over who stated that they were in paid employment (or self-employed) in the week ending last Sunday, excluding those who worked at home

*Other' includes Motorbike, Moped, Scooter and Taxi/Minicab

Percentages may not sum due to rounding

Source: Travel Survey for Northern Ireland (TSNI) 2016-2018, DfI

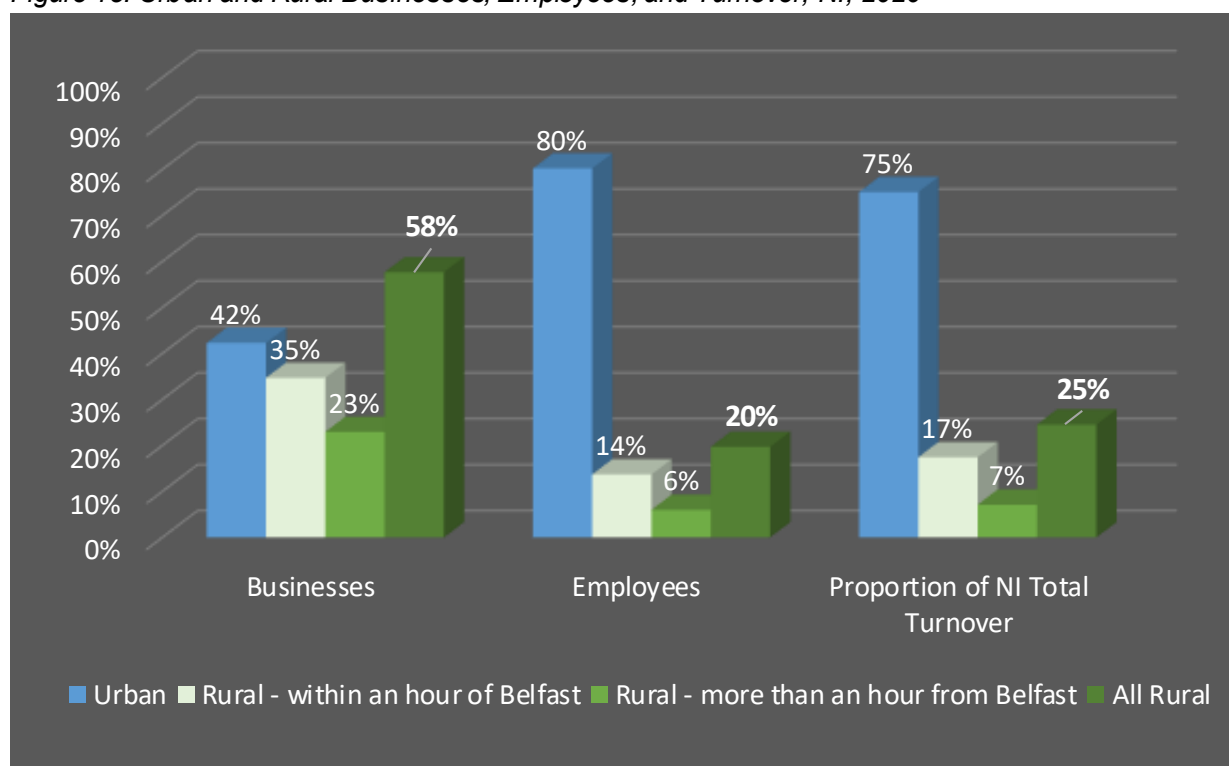
Despite growing environmental concerns, private car or van was still by far the most common method of commuting in NI, irrespective of home location (Figure 14). The preference of a large majority of rural (90%), and around three quarters of urban workers (75%) for private transport may be influenced by longer average journey distances, and reduced availability of public transport in rural areas.

Urban workers are much more likely to walk to work (12%) or to travel by bus (7%) than those from rural areas (6% and 1% respectively).

Industry

In 2020, more than half (58%) of NI businesses are located in rural areas, yet rural businesses account for just 20% of employees, and around a quarter (25%) of all business turnover (Figure 15).

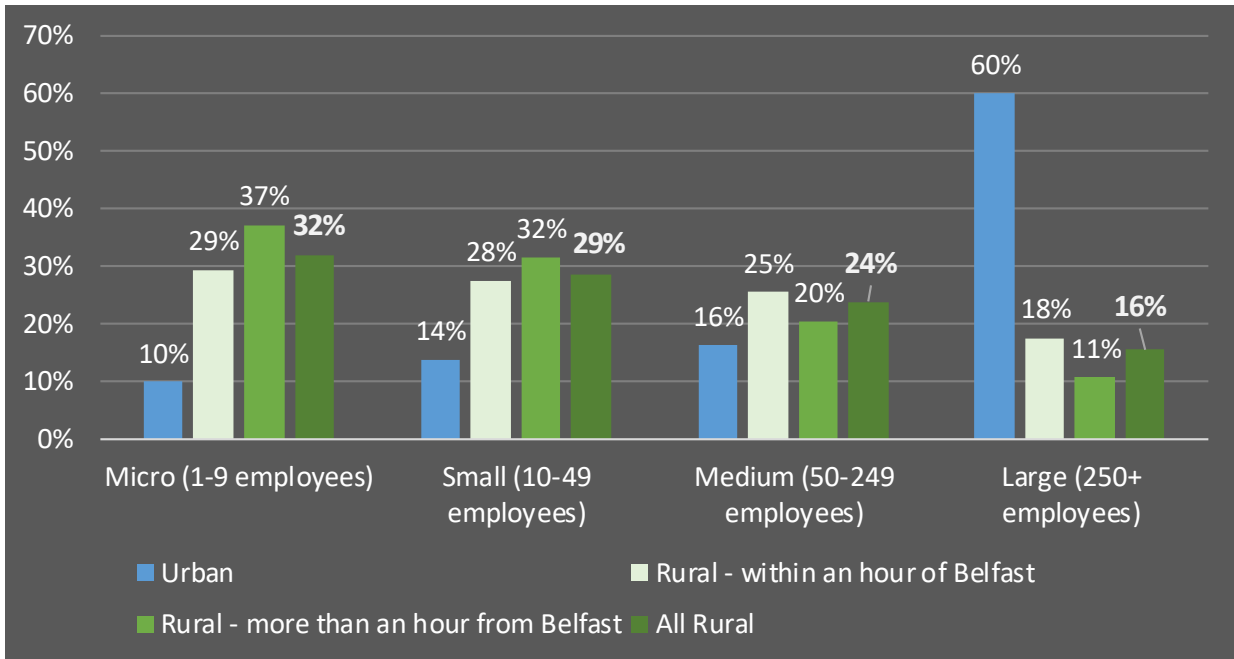
Figure 15: Urban and Rural Businesses, Employees, and Turnover, NI, 2020



Source: Inter-Departmental Business Register 2020, DoF

Rural businesses in 2020 are typically small - just under a third (32%) of all rural businesses have between one and nine employees, and just 16% of rural businesses qualify as 'Large' (i.e. having 250 or more employees), compared to 60% of urban businesses (Figure 16). Consequently, urban businesses account for approximately 75% of all business turnover in NI.

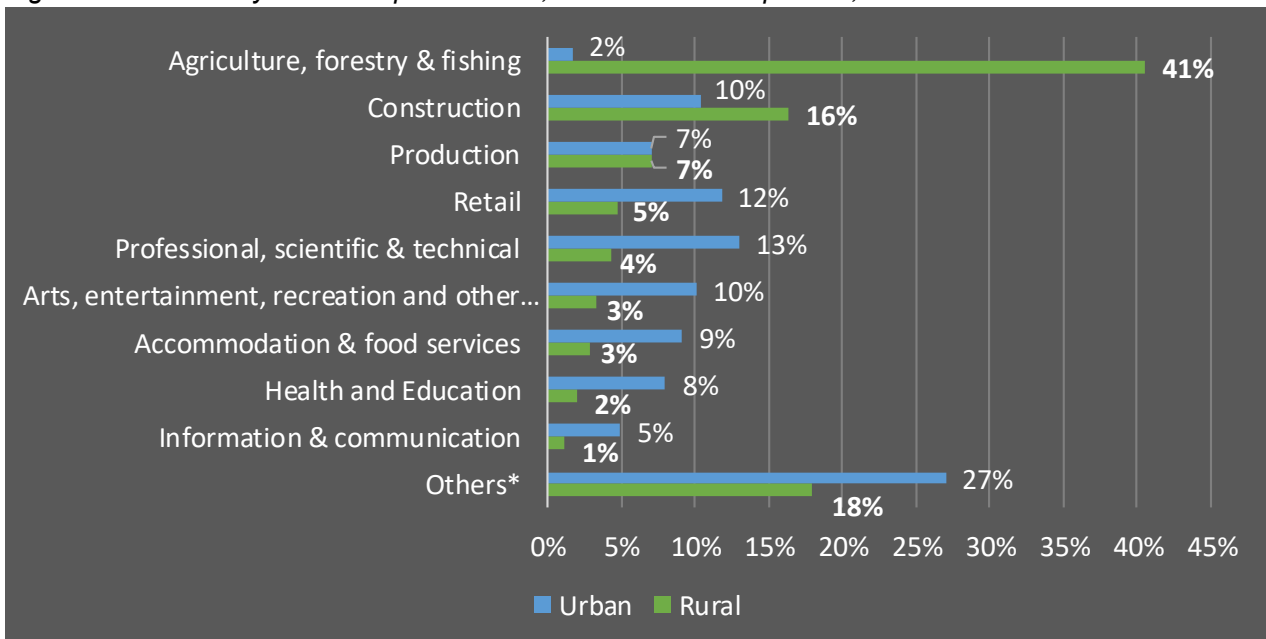
Figure 16: Business Size (Number of Employees), Urban/Rural Comparison, 2020



Source: Inter-Departmental Business Register 2020, DoF

In 2020, the rural and urban economies also differ structurally in terms of dominant sectors (Figure 17), with 41% of rural businesses being in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors, followed by construction (16%). Urban businesses are diverse, and spread across a variety of industries (Figure 18) with professional, scientific and technical businesses (13%) the largest, closely followed by retail (12%) and construction (10%).

Figure 17: NI Industry Sector Representation, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2020



*Others' include Finance, Insurance, Property, Public Administration, Transport and Storage

Source: Inter-Departmental Business Register 2020, DoF

The predominance of agriculture businesses is even more pronounced in rural areas more than an hour from Belfast. Almost half (48%) of all businesses in these areas are engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing, with a further 16% in construction (Table 1).

Table 1: Businesses by Industry Group, Urban and Rural, 2020

Broad Industry Group (1)	Urban	Rural			Total
		Rural - up to an hour from Belfast	Rural - over an hour from Belfast	All Rural	
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	2%	36%	48%	41%	24%
Production	7%	8%	6%	7%	7%
Construction	10%	16%	16%	16%	14%
Retail	12%	5%	4%	5%	8%
Accommodation & food services	9%	3%	3%	3%	6%
Professional, scientific & technical	13%	5%	3%	4%	8%
Health and Education	8%	3%	1%	2%	5%
Arts, entertainment, recreation and other services	10%	4%	3%	3%	6%
Others*	34%	22%	16%	19%	23%
All Industries	32,200	26,420	17,465	43,885	76,090

1 For full description of standard industrial classification (2007) see Office for National Statistics: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/ukstandardindustrialclassificationofeconomicactivities/uksic2007>

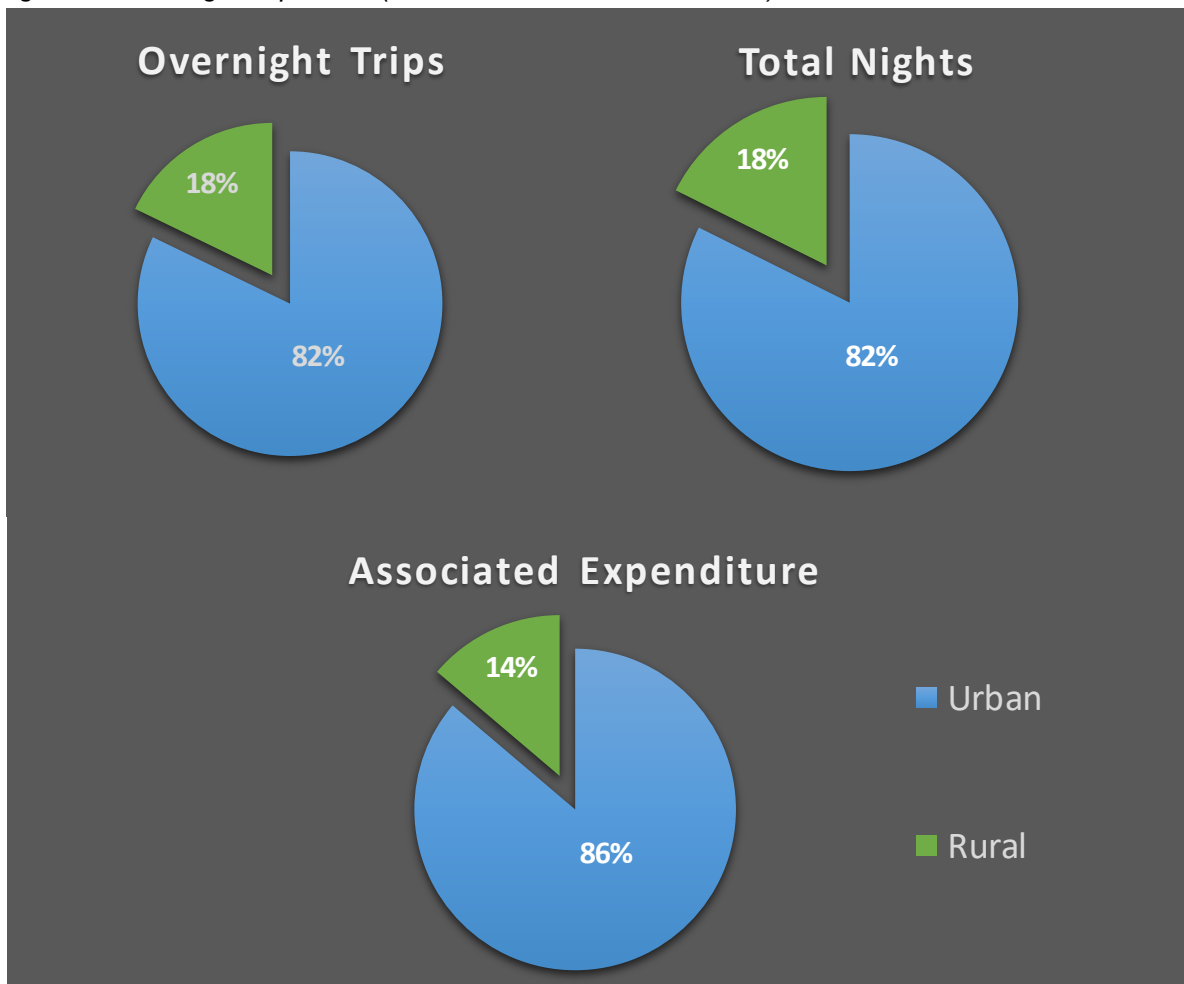
*Others' include Finance, Insurance, Property, Public Administration, Transport and Storage

Percentages may not sum due to rounding

Source: Inter-Departmental Business Register 2020, DoF

Tourism

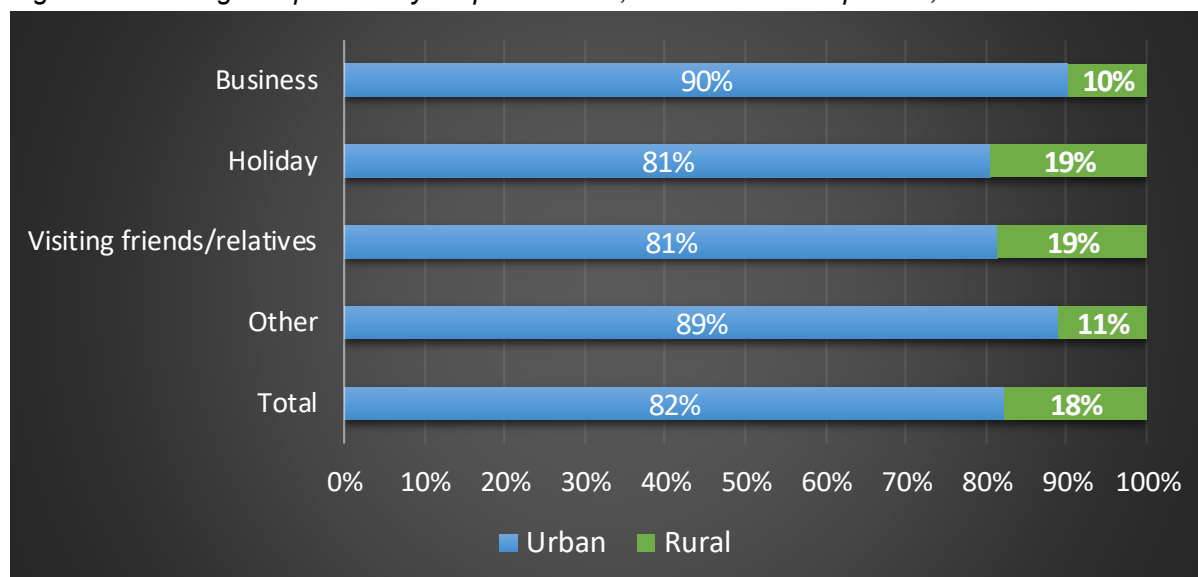
Figure 18: Overnight Trips to NI (Visits to Urban and Rural Areas), 2018



Sources: NI Tourism Statistics (NISRA) 2018, Northern Ireland Passenger Survey (NIPS), NISRA, Continuous Household Survey (CHS), NISRA, Survey of Overseas Travellers (SOT), Failte Ireland, Household Travel Survey (HTS), Central Statistics Office (CSO)

In 2018, just 18% of all overnight visits to NI, and 14% of associated expenditure, occurred in rural locations (Figure 18). These figures include visits within NI by people that live here, as well as by visitors from other countries. Total tourist expenditure on overnight trips in rural areas in 2018 was much smaller than in urban areas - £134m compared to £835m, perhaps unsurprising given the predominance of urban settings as tourist destinations.

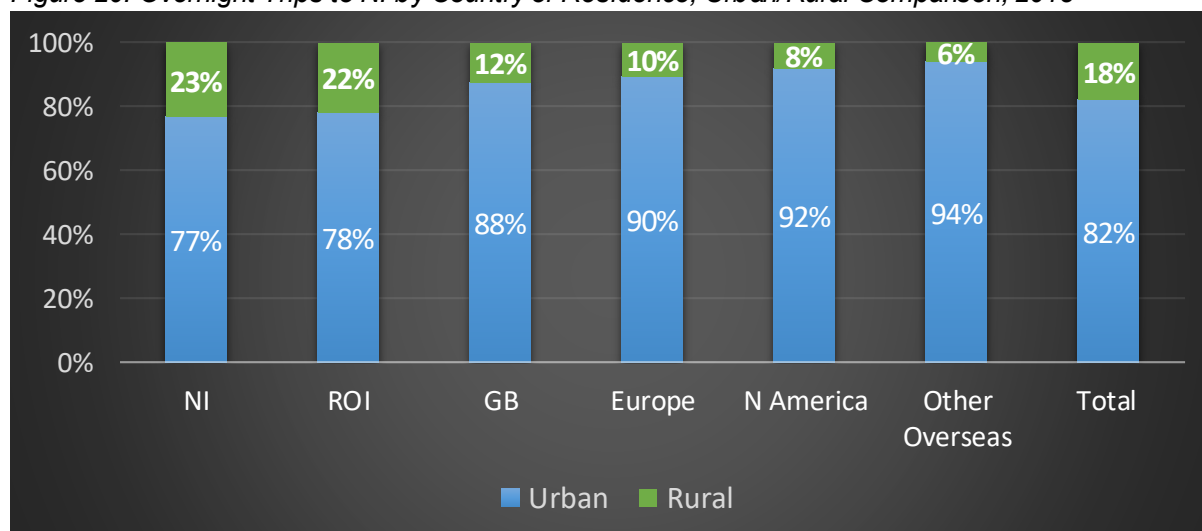
Figure 19: Overnight Trips to NI by Purpose of Visit, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2018



Sources: NI Tourism Statistics (NISRA) 2018, Northern Ireland Passenger Survey (NIPS), NISRA, Continuous Household Survey (CHS), NISRA, Survey of Overseas Travellers (SOT), Failte Ireland, Household Travel Survey (HTS), Central Statistics Office (CSO)

In 2018, 19% of overnight visits were to rural areas, with a similar proportion of overnight visits (19%) comprising visits to friends and relatives. Just 10% of trips for business purposes were to a rural area (Figure 19).

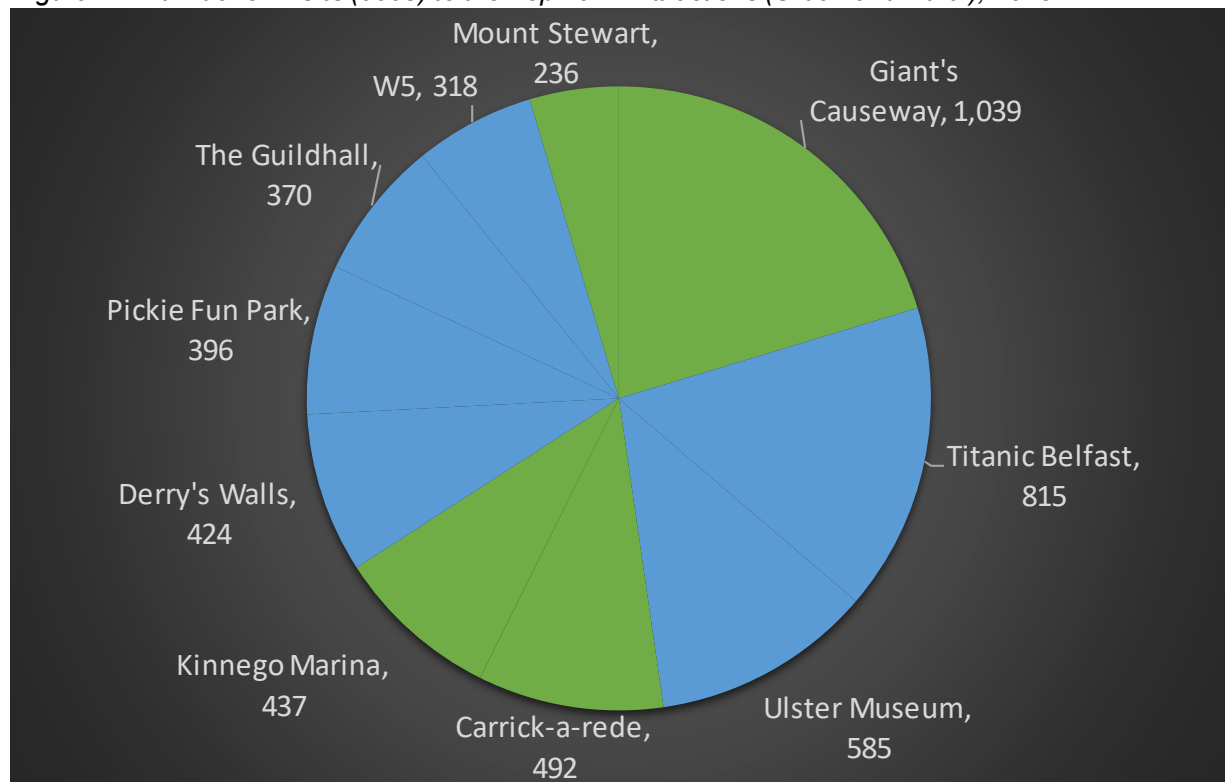
Figure 20: Overnight Trips to NI by Country of Residence, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2018



Sources: NI Tourism Statistics (NISRA) 2018, Northern Ireland Passenger Survey (NIPS), NISRA, Continuous Household Survey (CHS), NISRA, Survey of Overseas Travellers (SOT), Failte Ireland, Household Travel Survey (HTS), Central Statistics Office (CSO)

Almost a quarter (23%) of overnight trips by NI residents were to a rural location, with a similar proportion (22%) of visitors from the Republic of Ireland making overnight trips to rural areas (Figure 21). Visits made by those coming from outside the island of Ireland were much less likely to be to a rural location.

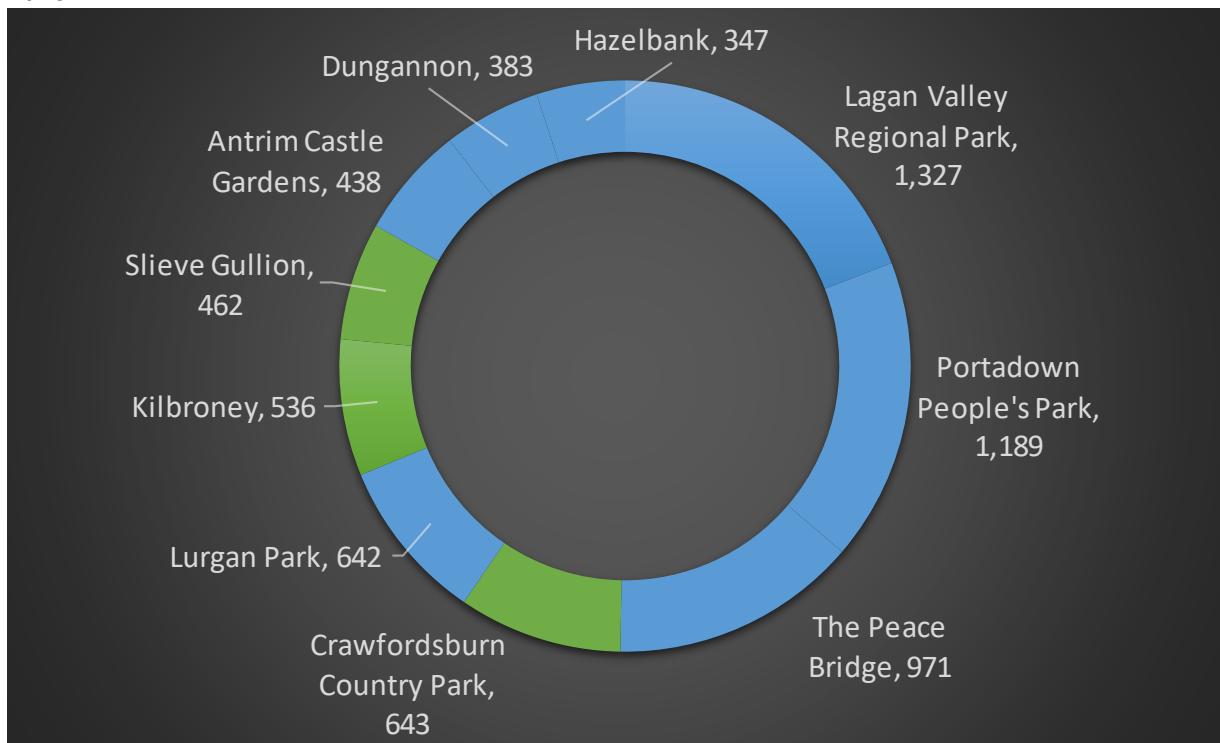
Figure 22: Number of Visits (000s) to the Top 10 NI Attractions (Urban and Rural), 2018



Source: NI Visitor Attraction Survey (NISRA) 2018

More than half (57%) of all visits to the top ten tourist attractions in NI (Figure 22), and just over three quarters (76%) of those to the top ten parks, country parks, forests and gardens, are in urban locations. However, the greater popularity of urban parks and gardens may reflect the more concentrated populations of towns and cities, and the greater convenience of local amenities for urban dwellers (Figure 23).

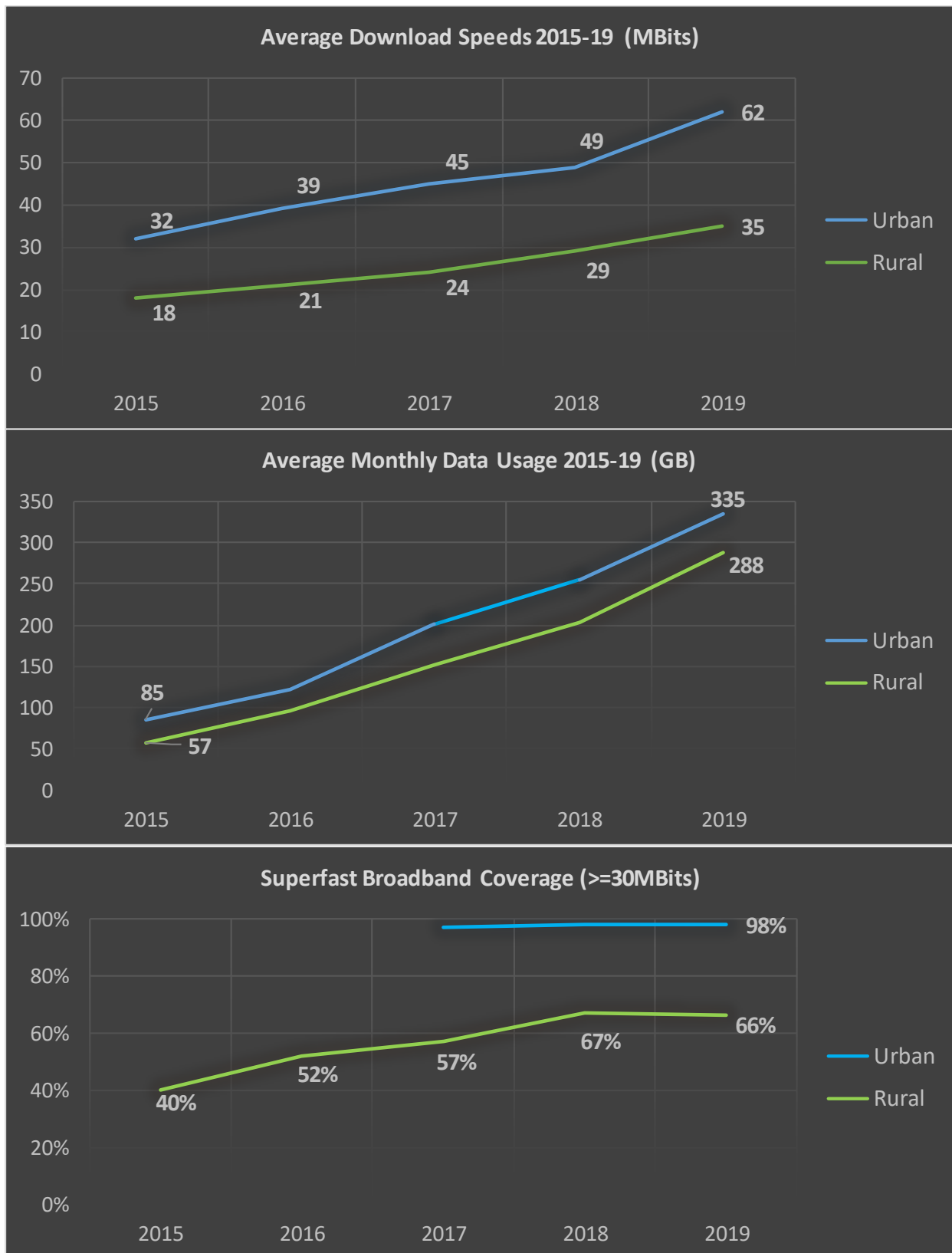
Figure 23: Visits (000s) to Top 10 Parks, Country Parks, Forests and Gardens (Urban and Rural), 2018



Source: NI Visitor Attraction Survey (NISRA) 2018

Connectivity

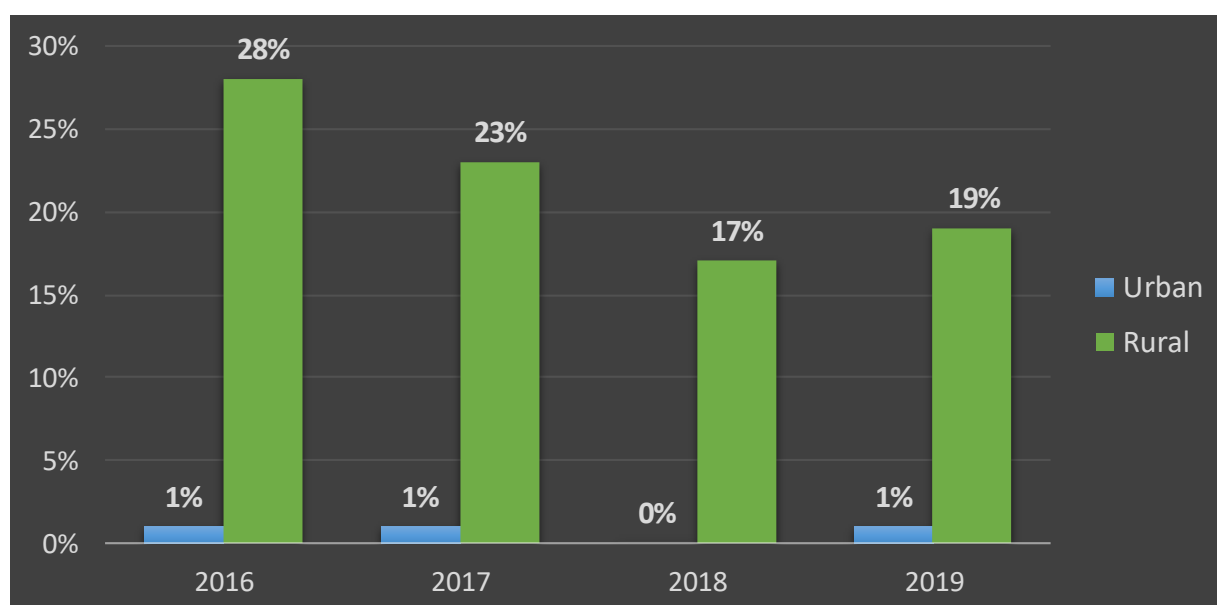
Figure 24: NI Average Broadband Speeds, Coverage and Data Usage, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2015-19



Broadband speeds and availability, though improving, are still much lower in rural than in urban areas, due in part to the disparity in infrastructure costs (Figure 24). This issue is UK-wide, but appears to be particularly pronounced in NI, due to how the rural population is distributed.

Average download speeds, data usage and coverage of superfast broadband are all reduced in rural compared to urban areas - in 2019, 19% of internet-enabled rural premises in NI are still unable to achieve a 'decent' broadband speed⁴ (Figure 25).

Figure 25: Percentage of NI Properties Unable to achieve a 'Decent' broadband service, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2016-19



*Decent service is defined by Ofcom as at least 10Mbit/s download, and 1Mbit/s upload speeds
Based on 'Locale' classification of Urban and Rural

Source: Ofcom Connected Nations 2015-19, Northern Ireland Reports
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0027/186408/connected-nations-2019-ni-report.pdf

The availability of public transport in rural areas is also much inferior to that in towns and cities, and crucial rural bus services are under increasing threat due to decreasing profitability and reductions in subsidies⁵.

The most recent published data from the Travel Survey NI (2016-18) revealed that less than a quarter (20%) of rural dwellers live within a 3 minute walk of the nearest bus stop, compared with 39% of those living in urban areas – with 9% of rural dwellers living a 44 minute or longer walk to their nearest stop (Figure 26).

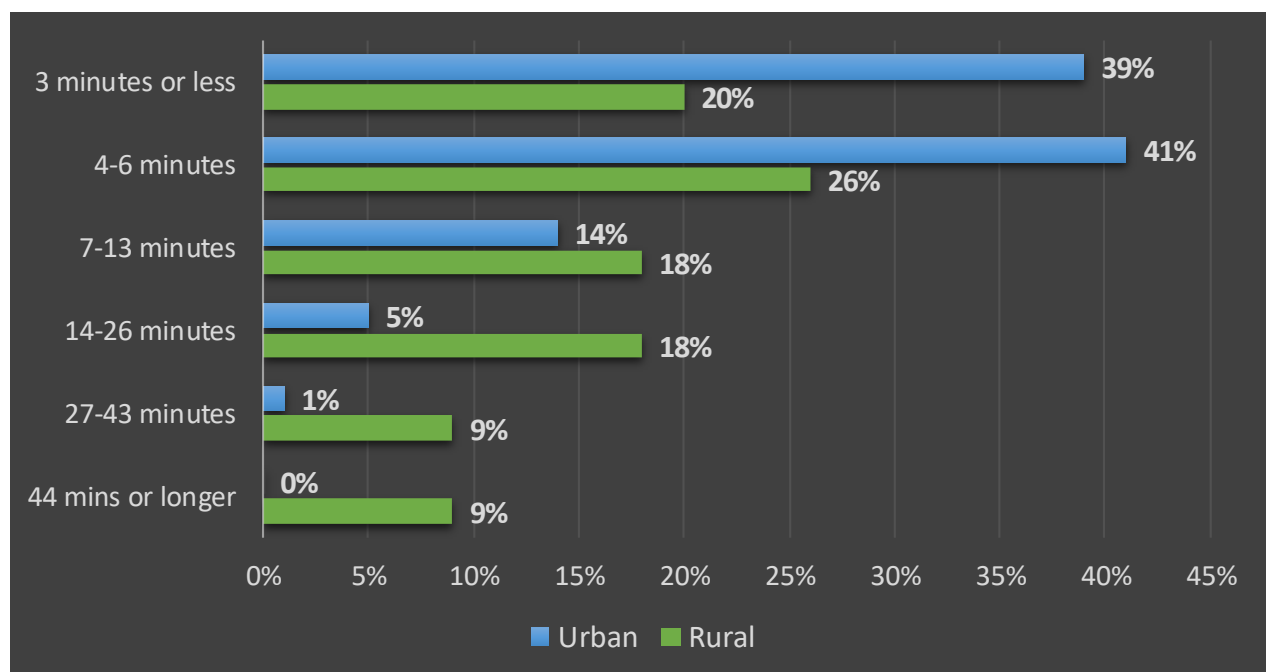
⁴ Defined by Ofcom as at least 10Mbit/s download and 1Mbit/s upload speeds, Ofcom, 2019: Connected Nations 2019, Northern Ireland report

⁵ Belfast Telegraph, January 23, 2018

This may account for the large majority of adults living in rural areas who report holding a full driving licence (85%, compared with 71% of urban dwellers). More than half (52%) of rural households reported ‘never’ using bus services.⁶

Distances to railway stations tend to be even longer for rural dwellers. When asked about walking distance from a railway station, an overwhelming majority (92%) of rural dwellers responded either that they would have to walk for 44 minutes or more, or that the distance was so great that the question did not apply.

Figure 26: Walking time to nearest bus stop, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2016-18

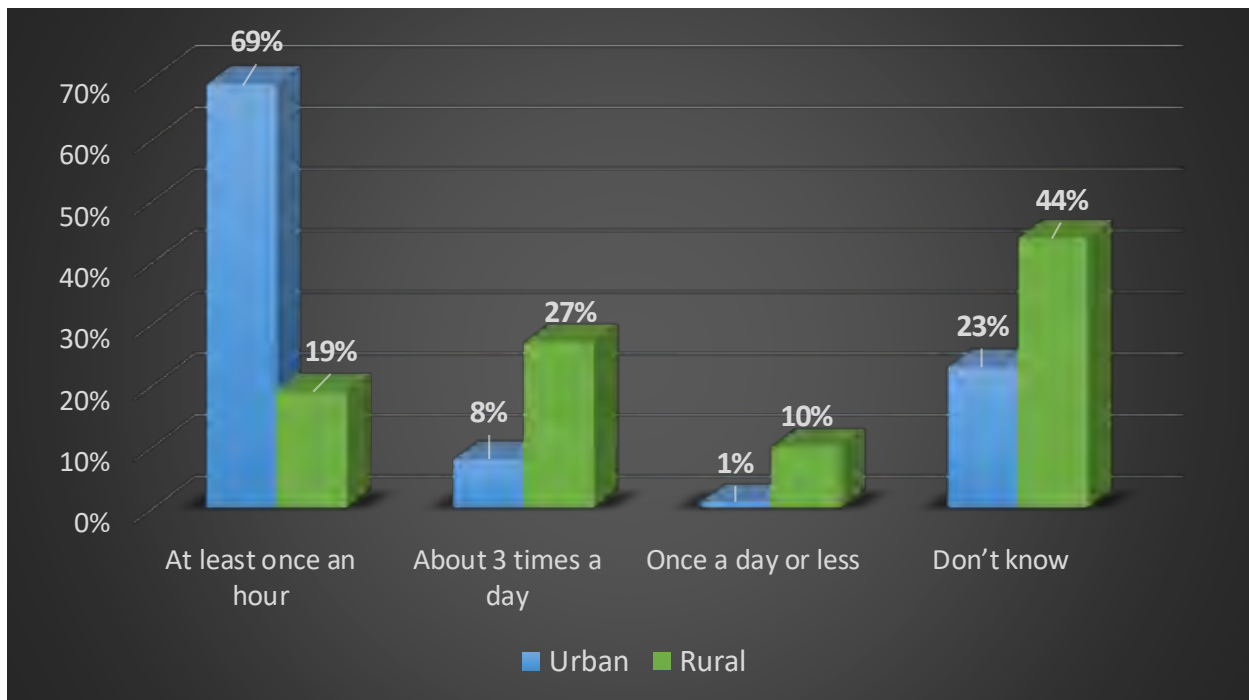


Source: TSNi (DfI), 2016-18

The frequency of public transport services also differs greatly between urban and rural areas. More than two thirds (69%) of urban dwellers reported a bus service frequency of at least once an hour, compared with 19% of those who live in rural locations (Figure 27). The frequency of rail services may be of less significance to the rural population, since most do not live in close proximity to a railway station.

⁶ Jack, C and Patten, N. *The contribution of key basic services to rural dwellers’ quality of life in Northern Ireland; a baseline review*, Agri-food and Biosciences Institute, 2014.

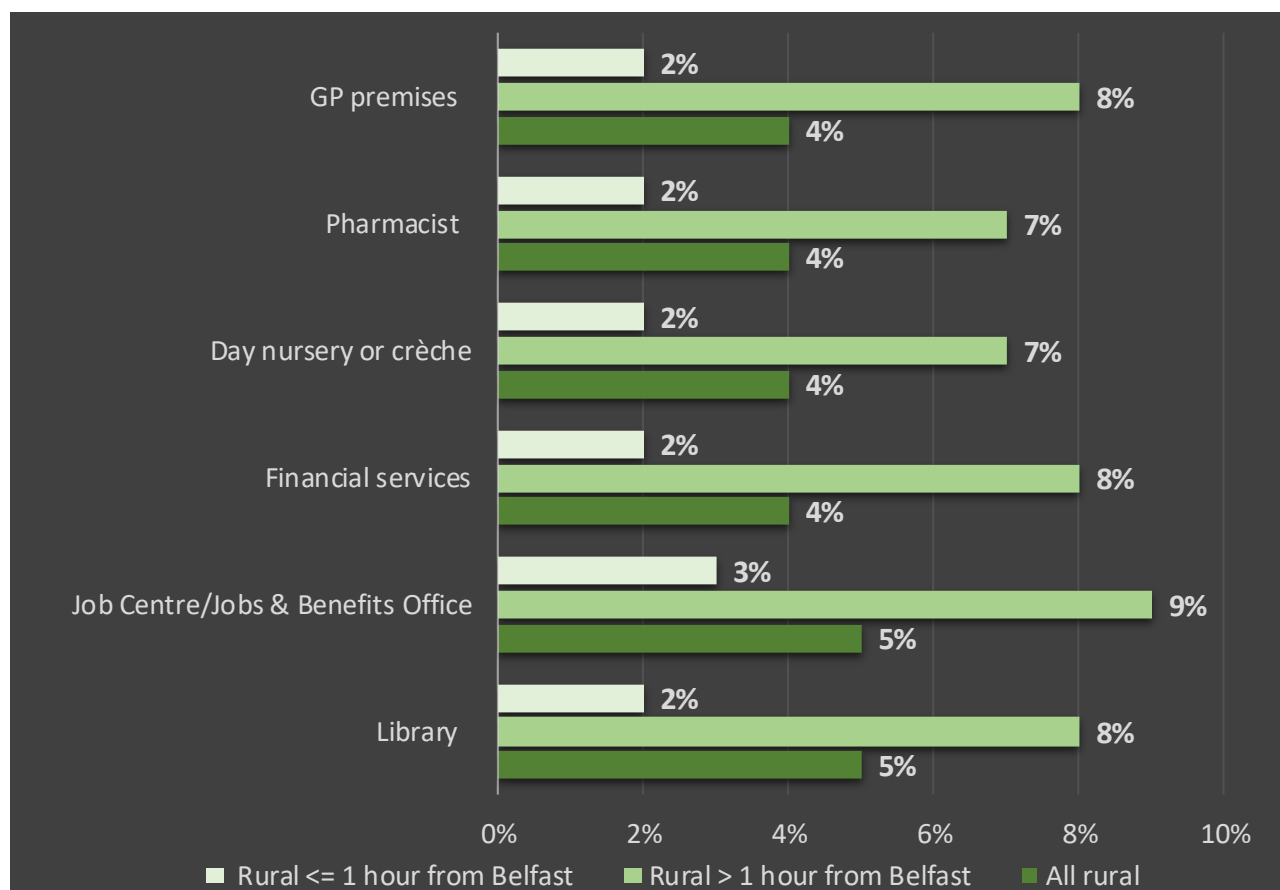
Figure 27: Bus Service Frequency, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2016-18



Source: TSNi (Dfl), 2016-18

Access to Services

Figure 28: Proportion of Small Areas without Public Transport Access to selected services, 2017

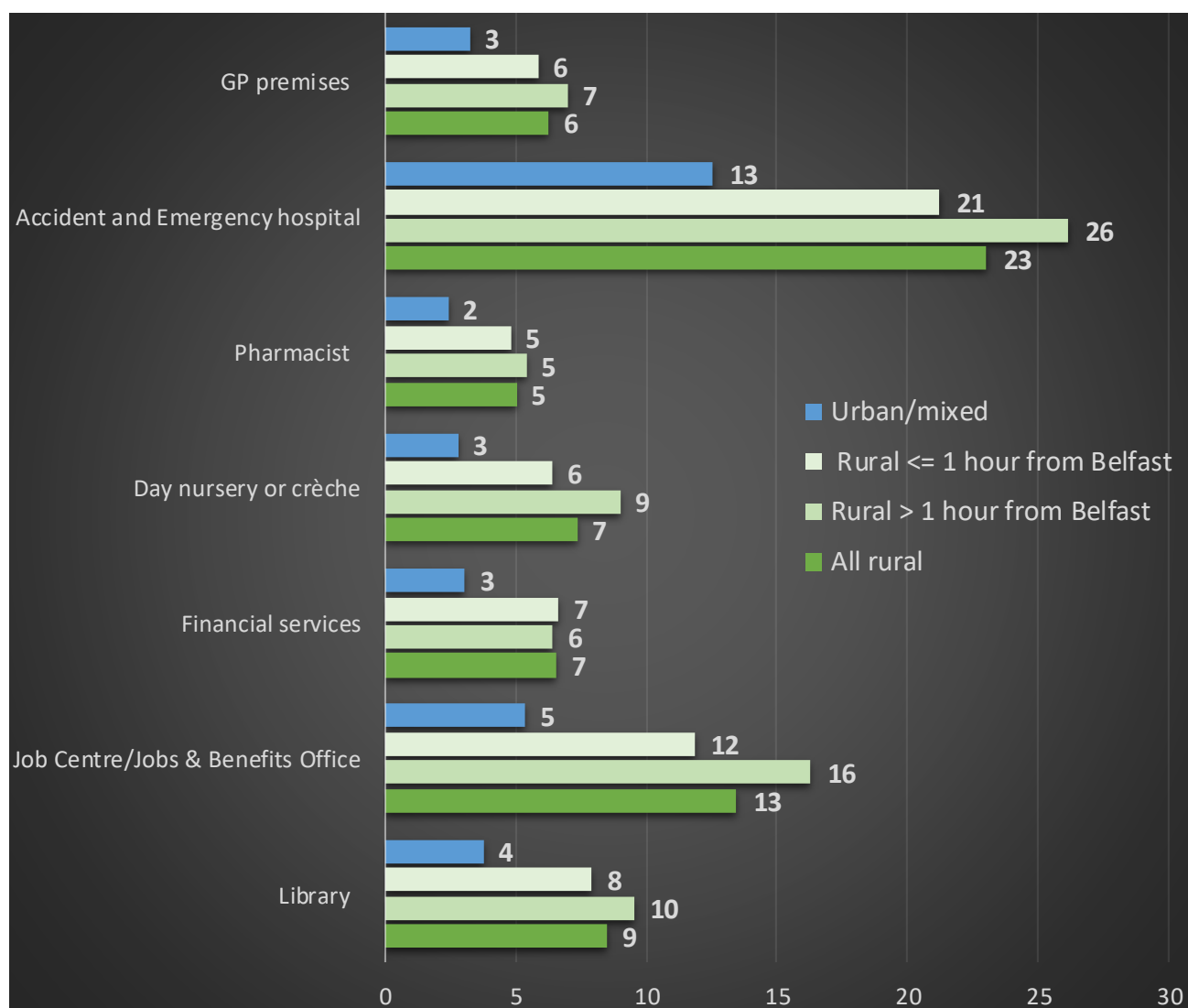


Note: 'Financial Services' includes ATMs, banks, building societies and credit unions.

Source: Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM), 2017

Access to key services can be a marker of disadvantage for people in rural communities, particularly for those living in more remote areas and for those without private transport. In rural areas more than an hour from Belfast, NISRA's Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM) indicates that access to key services by public transport is particularly poor (Figure 28) - while for others, journeys made by public transport may simply be impractical due to a combination of journey length and remote location.

Figure 29: Average Journey Times (in minutes, by car) to selected services, 2017



Notes: 'Financial Services' includes ATMs, banks, building societies and credit unions.

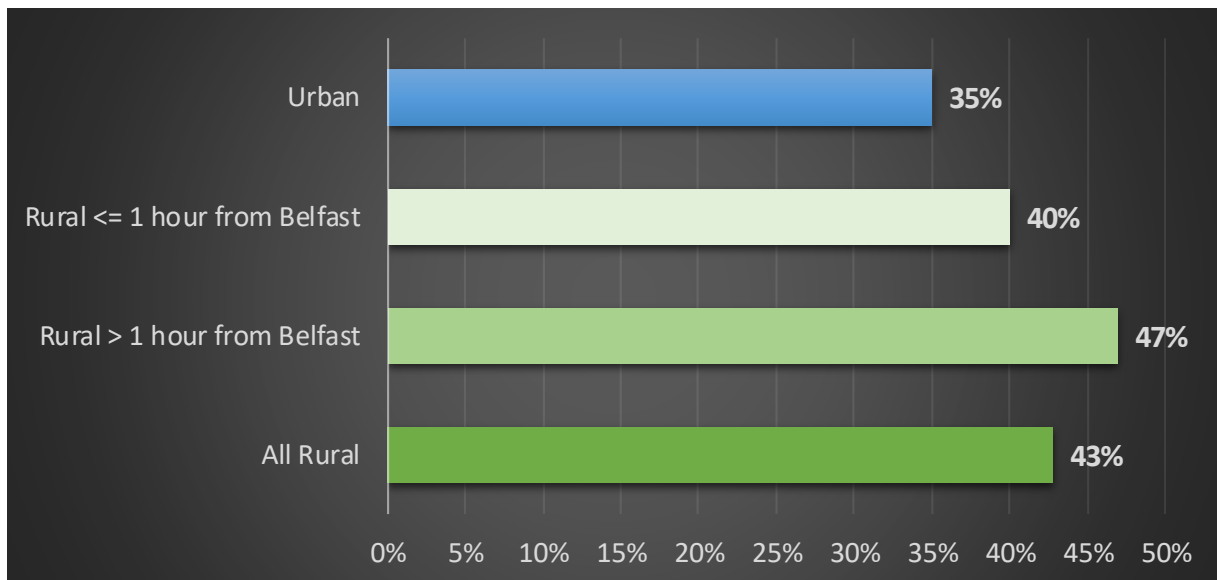
Source: Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM), 2017

For rural dwellers travelling by car, journey times to key services are substantially higher as for those living in towns and cities, sometimes double or greater, and this disparity is again more pronounced in rural areas more distant from Belfast.

The greatest disparity travel times are to hospitals with an accident and emergency facility, and to job centres/jobs and benefits offices. Those living in rural areas more than an hour from Belfast, are on average, a 26 minute drive away from an Accident and Emergency department, compared to an average 13 minute drive time for those living in urban areas.

Quality of Life

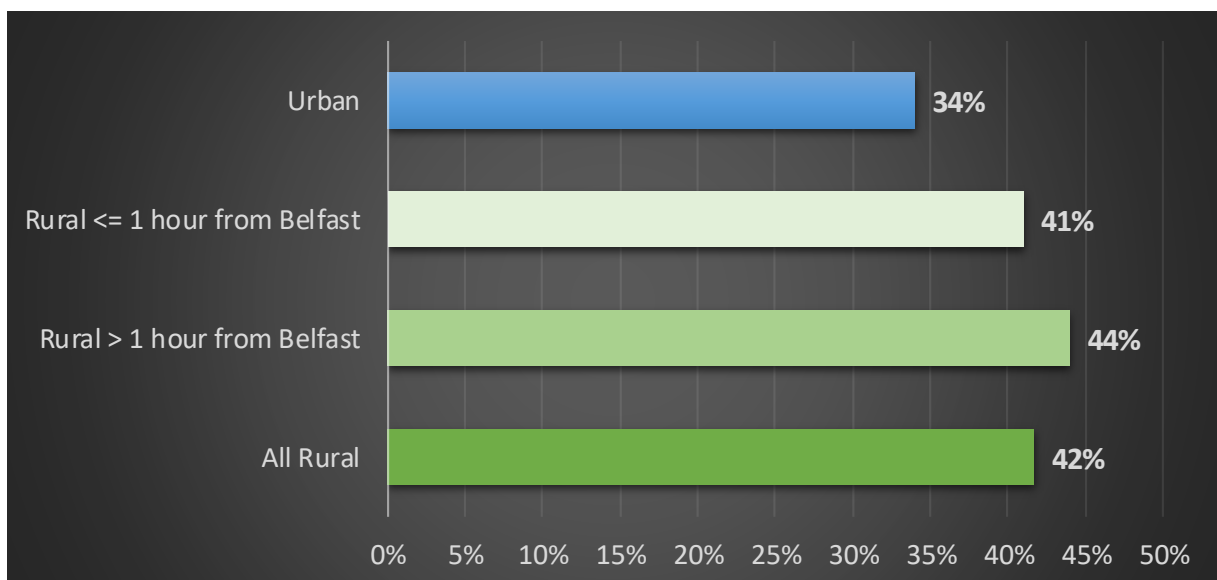
Figure 30: Self-Reported 'High' Personal Happiness, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2018-19



Note: Based on those scoring 9-10 on the question: 'Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday? Where 0 is 'not at all happy' and 10 is 'completely happy'.

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Population Survey, 2018/19

Figure 31: Self-Reported 'High' Life Satisfaction, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2018-19

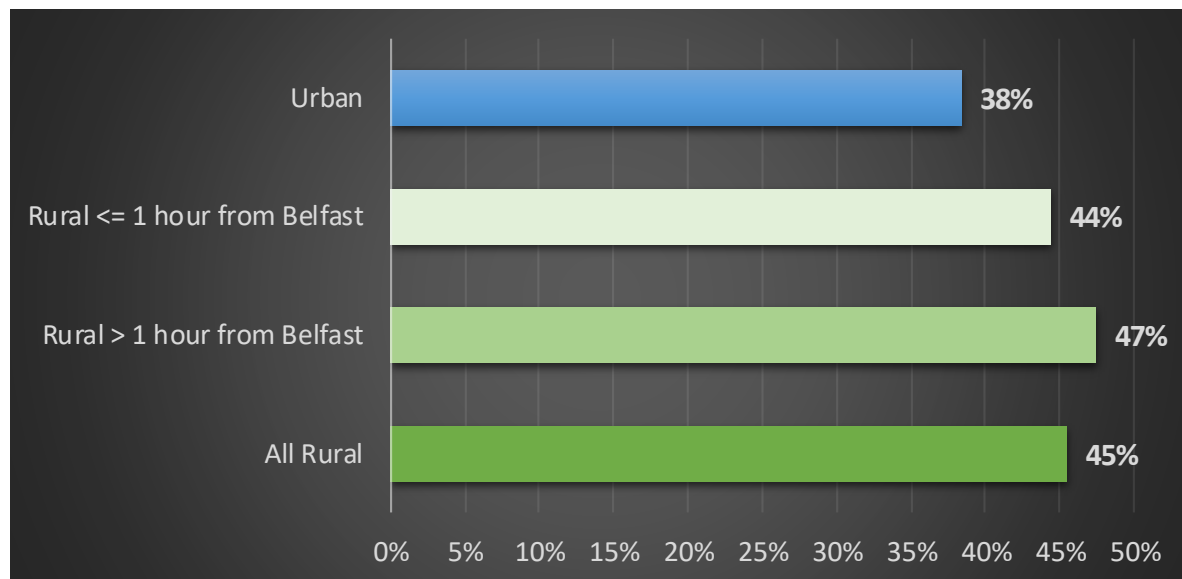


Note: Based on those scoring 9-10 on the question: 'Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays? Where 0 is 'not at all satisfied' and 10 is 'completely satisfied'.

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Population Survey, 2018/19

In 2018/19, people living in rural areas were consistently more likely than those in urban areas to report high happiness levels (43% compared to 35% respectively, Figure 30) and high life satisfaction (42% compared to 34%, Figure 31). Similarly, rural dwellers were more likely to report low anxiety levels than their urban counterparts (45% to 38%, Figure 32).

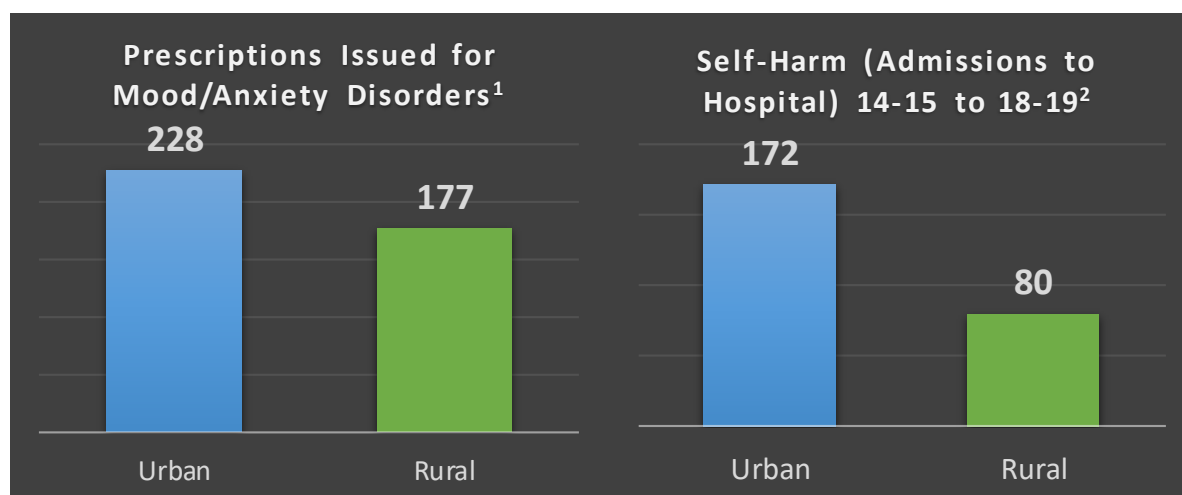
Figure 32: Self-Reported 'Low Anxiety', 2018-19



Note: Based on those scoring 0-1 on the question: 'Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday? Where 0 is 'not at all anxious' and 10 is 'completely anxious'.

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Population Survey, 2018/19

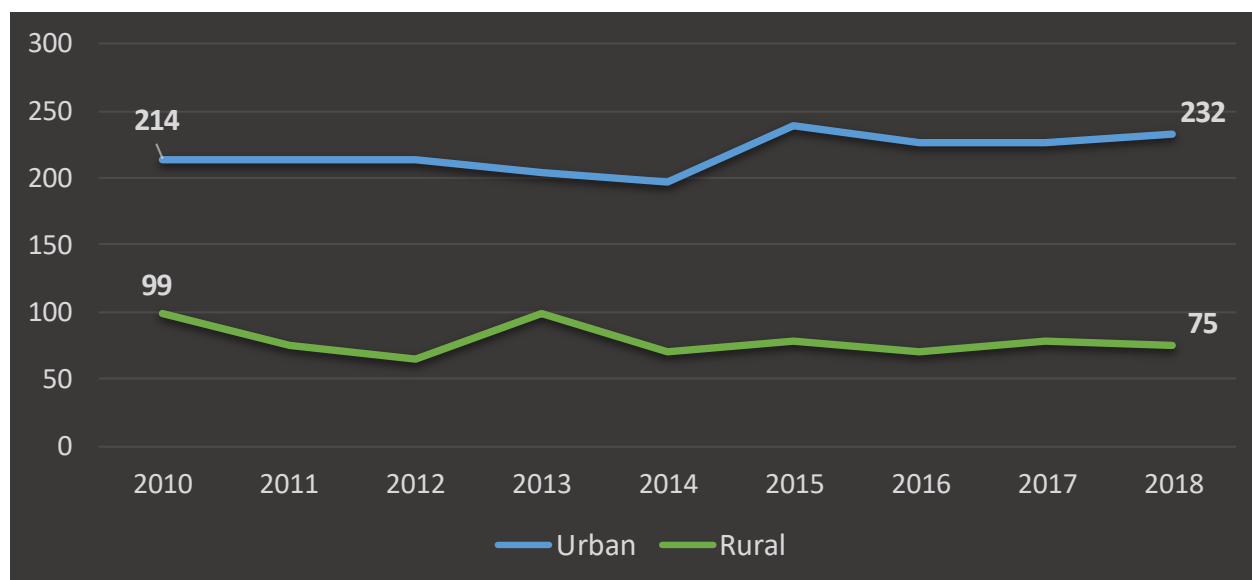
Figure 33: Prescriptions Issued for Mood Disorders (2018), Hospital Admissions for Self-Harm (to 2018-19), Urban/Rural Comparison



Notes: 1. Persons prescribed per 1,000 population, 2. Per 100,000 population

Source: Health Inequalities Monitoring Report 2020, Department of Health (DoH)

Figure 34: Number of Deaths Registered by Suicide in Northern Ireland, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2010-18



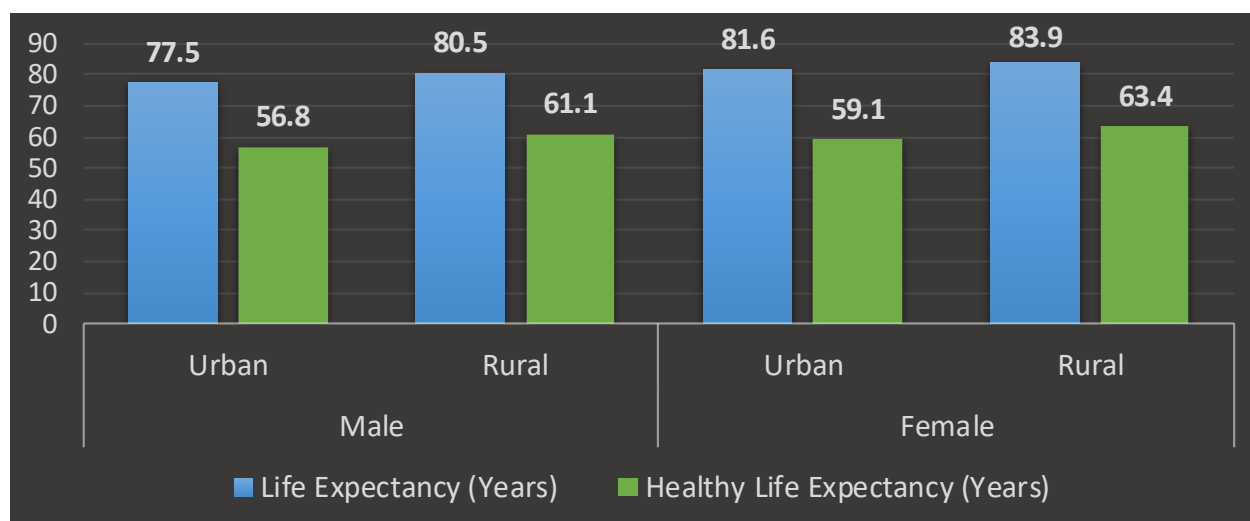
Note: All deaths data supplied by NISRA Vital Statistics Unit is based on the year of registration rather than the year of occurrence unless otherwise stated. Events such as suicide are likely to be referred to the coroner. This can take some time, therefore deaths recorded each year may have occurred prior to the registration year.

Source: NISRA Vital Statistics Unit (DoF), 2019

The rate of self-harm related hospital admissions are lower in rural areas (Figure 33), as is the number of prescriptions issued for medications to treat mood and anxiety disorders. Fewer deaths are registered by suicide in rural areas, with the number of registered suicides in rural areas declining by almost a quarter between 2010 and 2018 (Figure 34).

On the surface, these figures suggest that the rural population benefits from better mental health overall. However it must also be considered that not all with mental health difficulties seek treatment, and difficulties with access, reporting, and proximity to mental health services could potentially contribute to the lower figures in rural communities.

Figure 35: Life Expectancy at Birth, and 'Healthy' Life Expectancy¹ (Years), Urban/Rural Comparison, 2016-18



1. This is the average number of years a person can expect to live in good health. HLE provides an estimate of lifetime spent in 'Very Good' or 'Good' health, calculated using respondents' perception of their own health according to the Health Survey Northern Ireland (HSNI).

Source: Health Inequalities Monitoring Report 2020, Department of Health (DoH)

The most recent data (covering 2016-18) suggests that life expectancy is notably higher in rural areas than in towns and cities in NI. Males living in rural areas can, on average, expect to live approximately three years longer, and rural females over two years longer, than their urban counterparts.

This disparity is further emphasised in the projected 'healthy' years of life – both males and females can expect over 4 years more 'healthy' years of life than urban dwellers (Figure 35).

Table 2: Median Emergency Service (Ambulance and Fire) Response Times (Minutes and Seconds), Urban/Rural Comparison, 2019

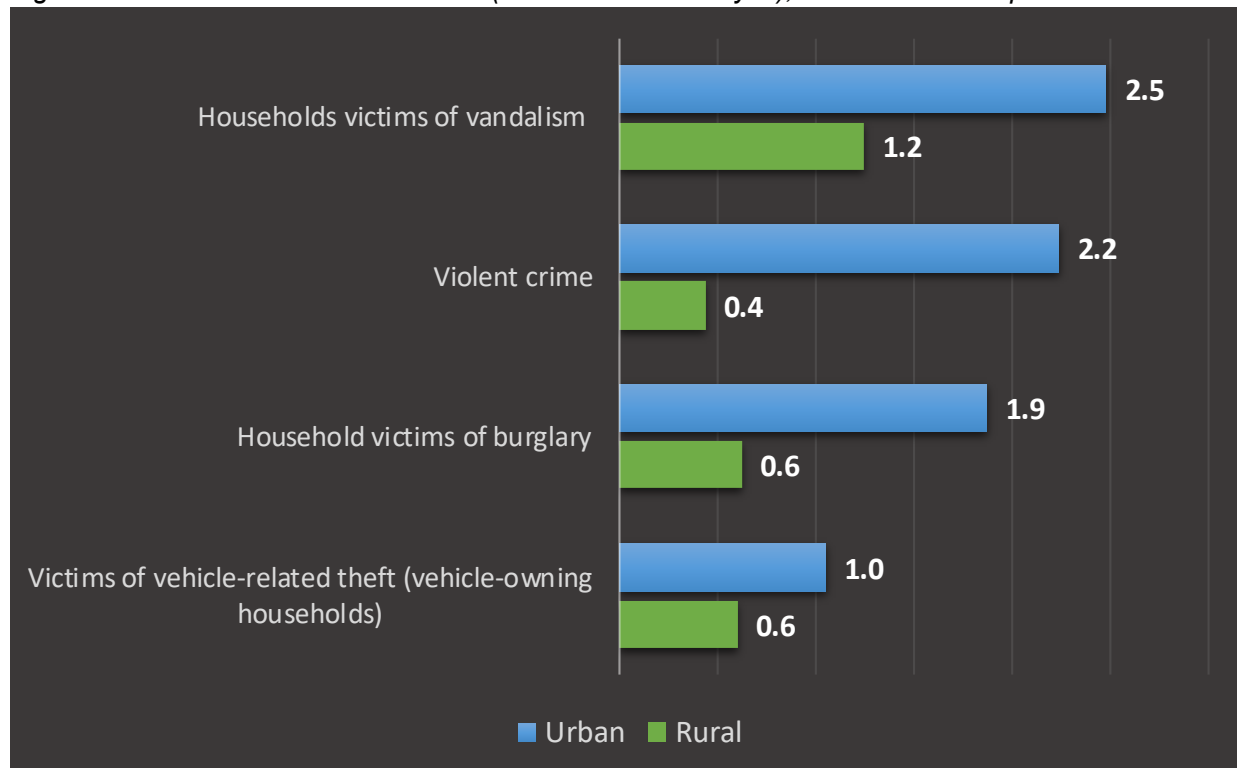
Ambulance	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Urban	00:07:46	00:08:09	00:08:46	00:11:32	00:13:14
Rural	00:15:03	00:15:34	00:16:08	00:18:15	00:20:33
Fire Service	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Urban	00:05:21	00:07:27	00:06:52	00:07:00	00:07:02
Rural	00:12:07	00:08:32	00:13:54	00:14:11	00:14:36

Source: Health Inequalities Monitoring Report 2020, Department of Health (DoH)

In terms access to emergency services, ambulance and fire service response times are substantially longer in rural than in urban areas. People living in rural areas wait on average around 7 minutes longer for ambulance and fire service response than those living in towns and cities (Table 2).

Crime

Figure 36: NI Crime Victimization Rates (as % of those surveyed), Urban/Rural Comparison 2018-19

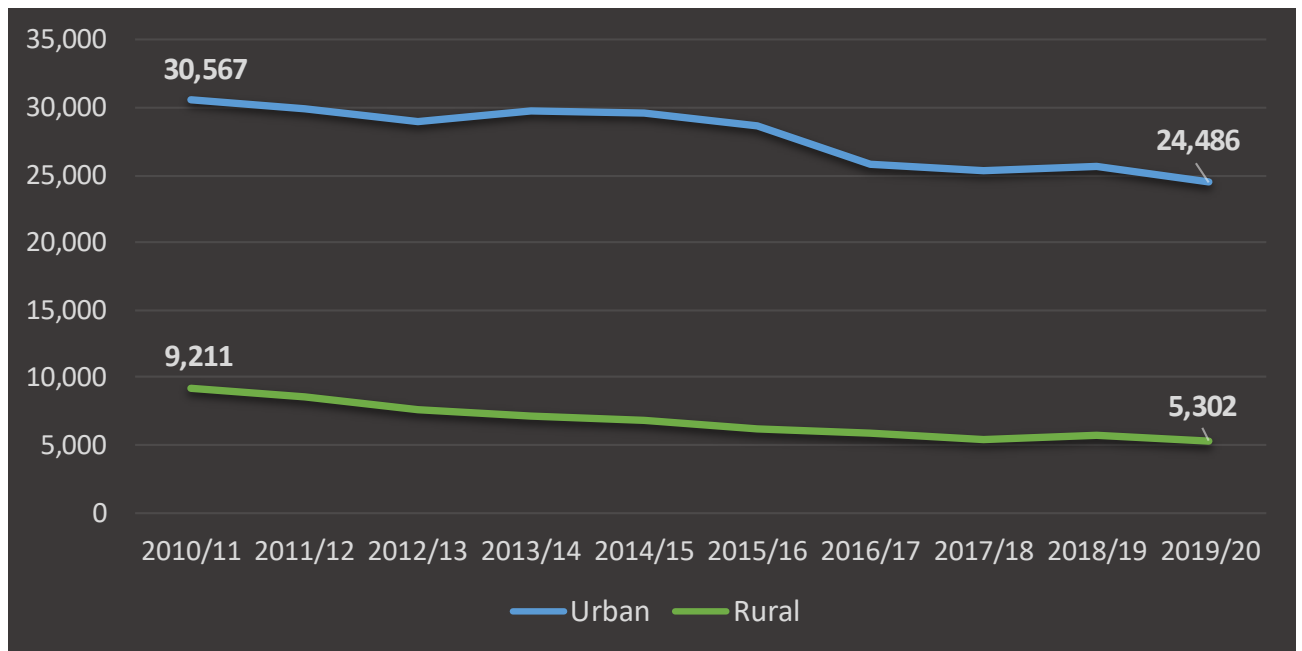


* Bases for vehicle-related theft will be lower as they are based on vehicle owners only.

Source: NI Safe Community Survey (DoJ), 2019

The most recent NI Safe Community Survey results suggest that people living in urban areas are much more likely to experience certain types of crime than their rural counterparts, although the proportion of those surveyed experiencing each crime type was generally low. Urban residents were more than twice as likely to experience acts of vandalism, more than three times more likely to experience domestic burglary, and more than five times more likely to experience violent crime, than those living in rural areas (Figure 36).

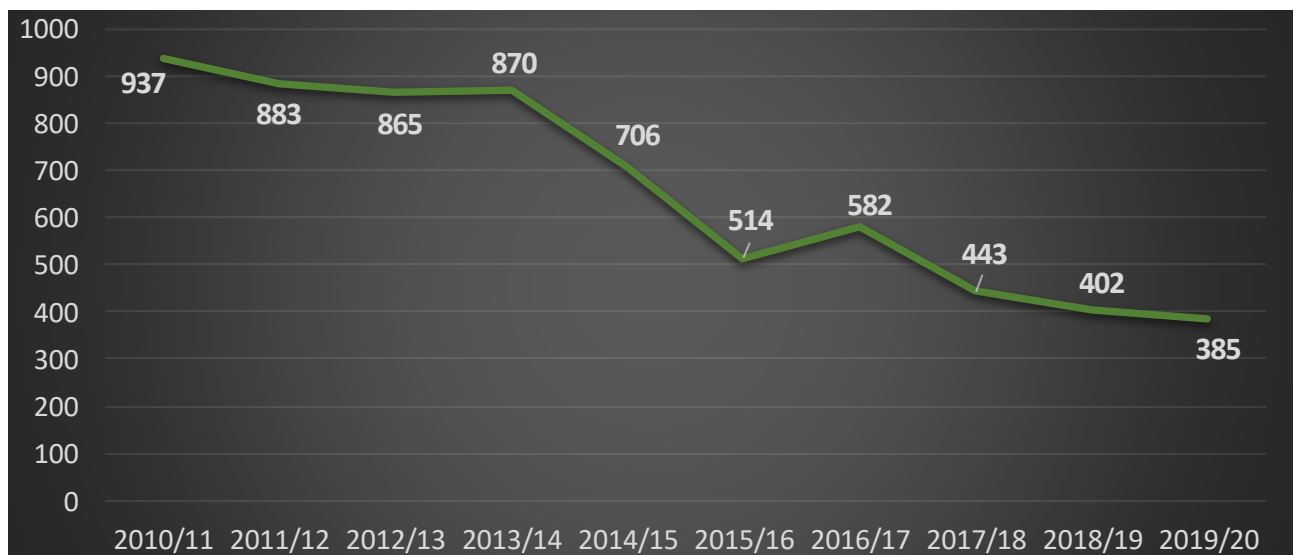
Figure 37: Trends in Burglary, Robbery and Theft Offences, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2010/11 to 2019/20



Source: Agricultural and Rural Crime in NI Bulletin (PSNI), March 2020

There has been a steady decline in the numbers of recorded burglary, robbery and theft offences in NI since 2010/11, although the rate of decrease has slowed since 2016/17. The rate of decline in recorded offences has been proportionately steeper in rural than in urban areas. Between 2010/11 and 2019/20 the proportion of burglary, robbery and theft offences occurring in rural settlements fell from 23% to 18% of the NI total (Figure 37).

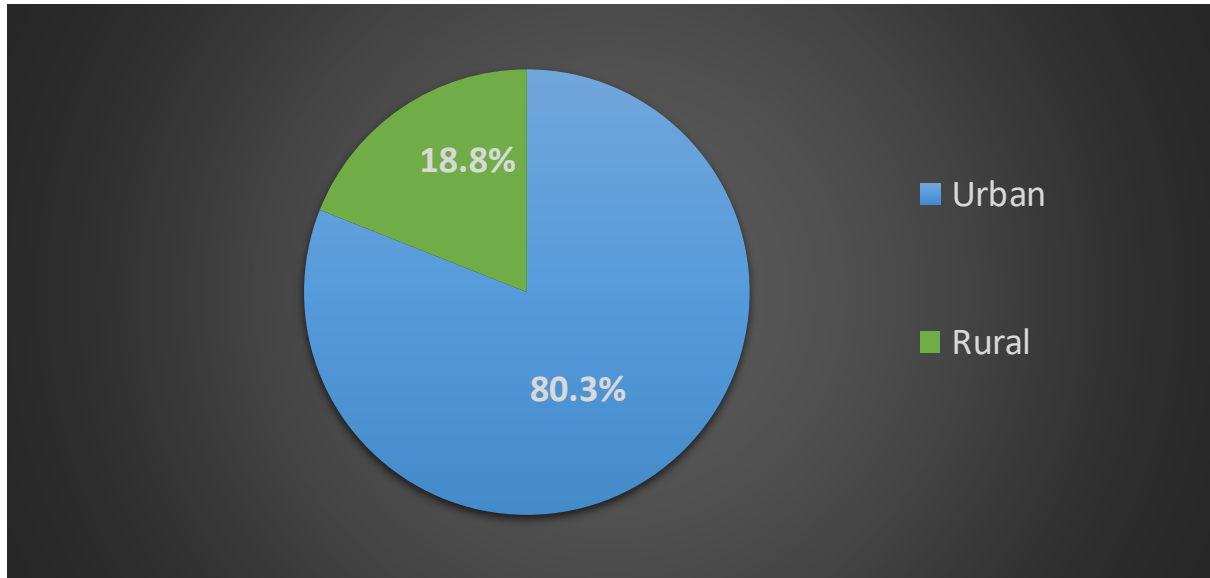
Figure 38: NI Trends in Agriculture Crime (Burglary, Robbery and Theft Offences for Agricultural-based Activity), 2010/11 to 2019/20



Source: Agricultural and Rural Crime in NI Bulletin, PSNI (March) 2020

Over approximately the same time period (2010/11 to 2019/20), the numbers of recorded offences relating to agricultural crime (burglary, robbery and theft offences for agricultural-based activity) has declined by more than half, from 937 in 2010/11, to 385 in 2019/20 (Figure 38). It should be noted however, that agriculture-related crimes do not occur exclusively in rural areas.

Figure 39: Police Recorded Crime (all offences), NI Urban/Rural Split*, 2019

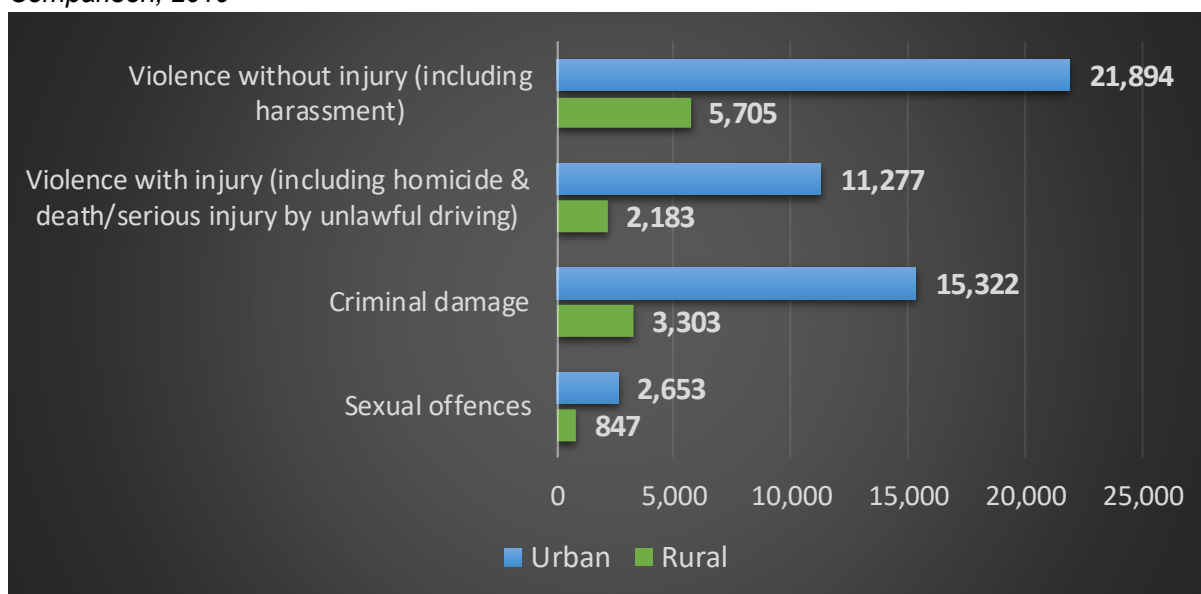


*0.9% of cases could not be allocated an urban/rural classification due to missing postcode

Source: PSNI, 2020

The 2019 Police Recorded Crime statistics from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) revealed that more than three quarters (80.3%) of all recorded offences occurred in urban areas, with 18.8% of all recorded offences occurring in rural areas (Figure 39).

Figure 40: Police Recorded Crime (violent crime, criminal damage and sexual offences, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2019



Source: PSNI, 2019

Violent crimes, criminal damage and sexual offences, are much more likely to be recorded in urban areas. In 2019, the numbers of recorded offences in these categories mirror the overall urban/rural split – with approximately five times as many offences recorded in urban areas. The gap narrows in terms of sexual offences, where just over three quarters (76%) were recorded in urban areas (Figure 40).

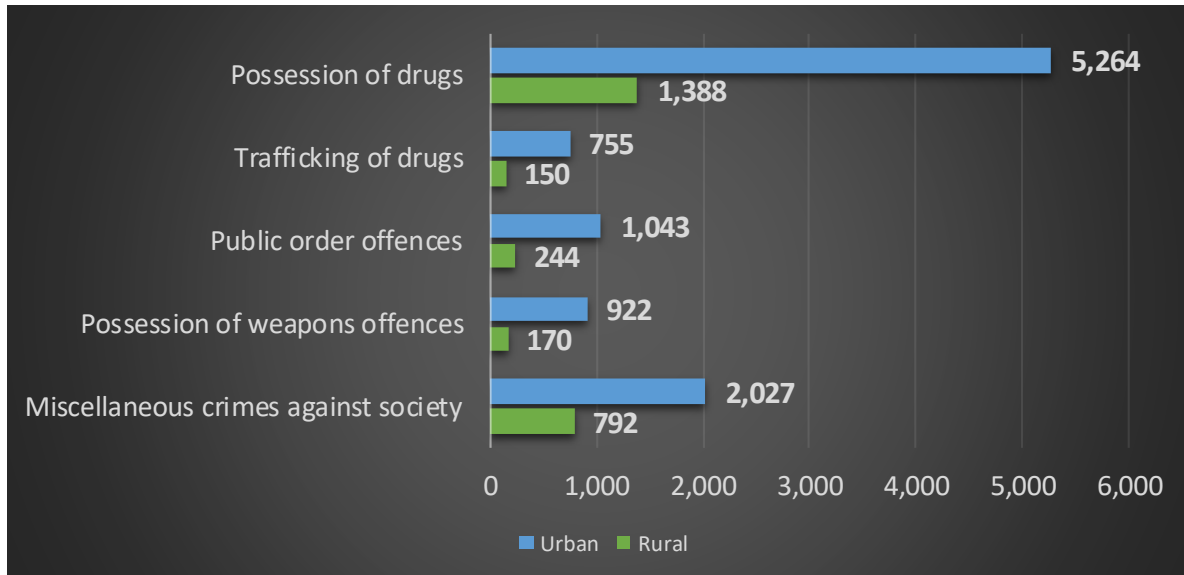
Figure 41: Police Recorded Crime (Robbery, Burglary and Theft Offences), Urban/Rural Comparison, 2019



Source: PSNI, 2019

Perhaps unsurprisingly, robbery, burglary and theft offences were substantially more likely to be recorded in urban areas in 2019. Shoplifting offences in urban areas dwarfed the total for rural areas, with 96% of these occurring in urban areas. The gap narrowed with respect to vehicle offences (72% to 28%), and all burglary types (73% to 27%).

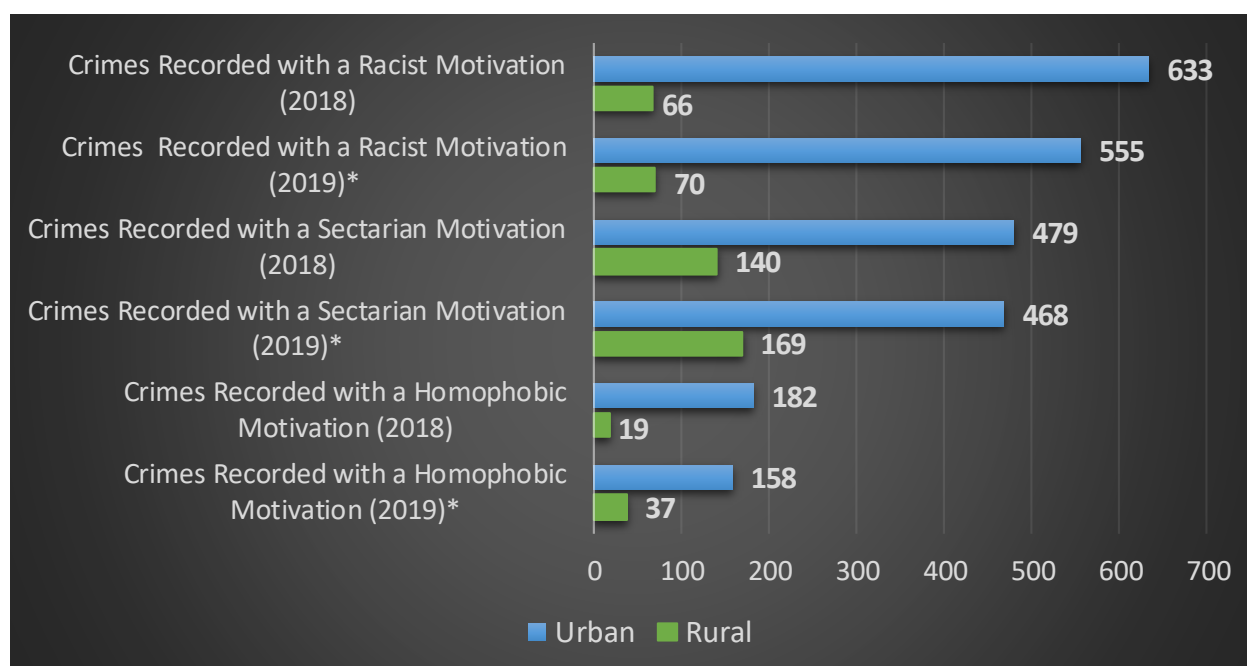
Figure 42: Police Recorded Crime (Drugs, Weapons, Public Order and Miscellaneous Offences), Urban/Rural Comparison, 2019



Source: PSNI, 2019

Recorded offences for drugs, weapon possession, public order and miscellaneous crimes again show a strong affinity with urban areas, however, 20% of drug possession offences occurred in rural areas (Figure 42).

Figure 43: Recorded Crimes with a Hate Motivation, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2018-19



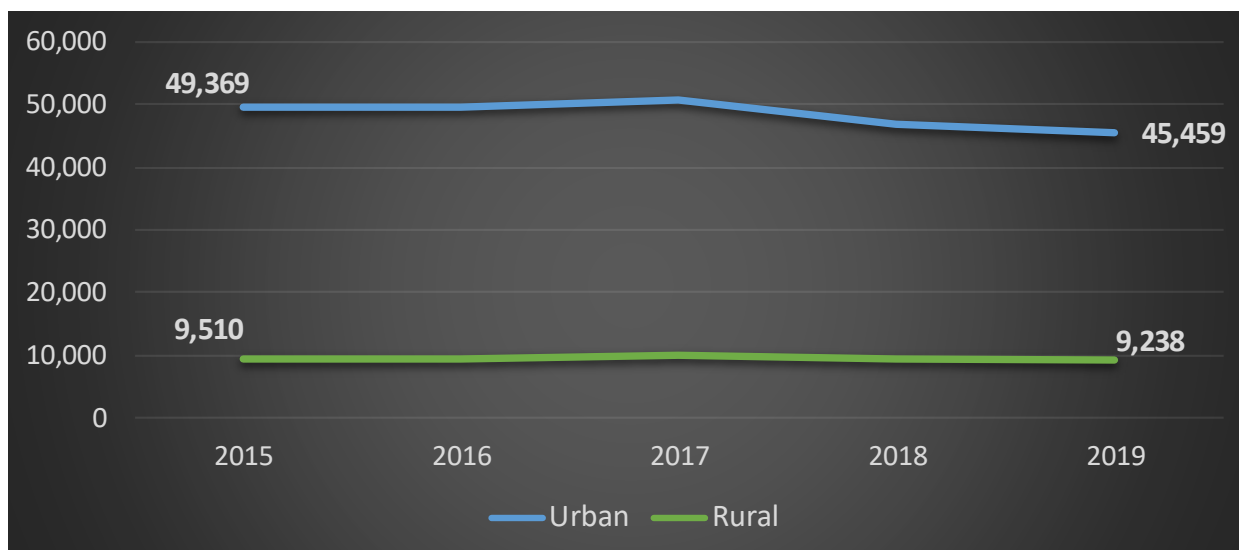
*excluding fraud

Source: PSNI, 2019

Hate crime remains a significant issue in NI society. An urban/rural comparison of the number of recorded offences with a racist, sectarian or homophobic motivation reveals a decline in these offences in urban areas between 2018 and 2019, but a corresponding increase for all three types in rural areas.

In particular, crimes with a homophobic motivation recorded in rural areas almost doubled between 2018 and 2019 (from 19 to 37 – Figure 43) despite a decline in urban areas over the same period.

Figure 44: Recorded Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Incidents, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2015-19

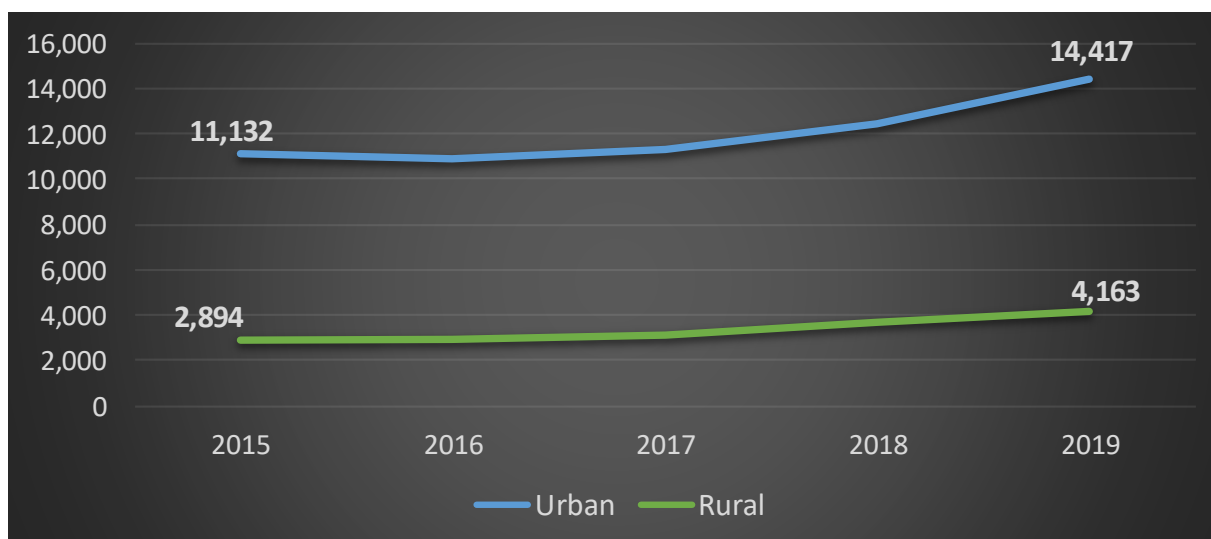


Source: PSNI, 2019

The number of anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents recorded by PSNI has seen a decline in both urban and rural areas since 2017 (Figure 44). While the vast majority (83%) of these incidents did occur in urban areas in 2019, they are not an exclusively urban phenomenon. Indeed, the rate of decline for ASB incidents in rural areas has shown a much less pronounced decline since 2017.

Conversely, the number of crimes recorded with a domestic abuse motivation has increased markedly over the five year period 2015-19 in both urban and rural areas. The urban increase has been pronounced (30%), but the increase in rural areas has been even more apparent over the same period (44% - Figure 45).

Figure 45: Crimes Recorded with a Domestic Abuse Motivation, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2015-19

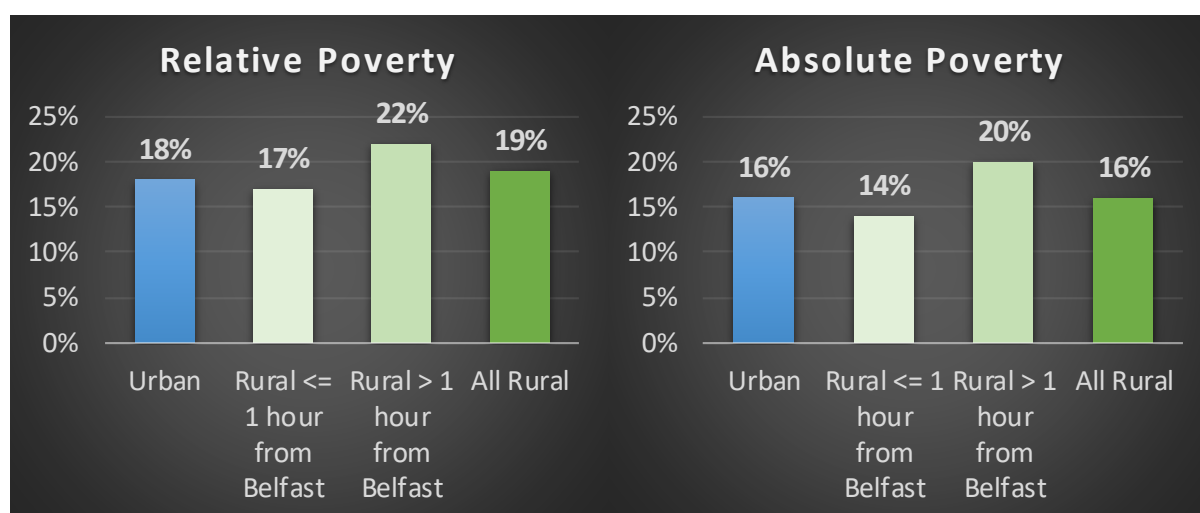


Source: PSNI, 2019

Household Income, Housing and Poverty

Rural households are just as likely as those in urban areas to fall below either relative or absolute poverty levels. However, overall figures for rural areas disguise intra-rural differences in the experience of poverty. Poverty levels in households in rural areas which are more than an hour's journey from Belfast are much higher than those of rural areas closer to the city (Figure 46).

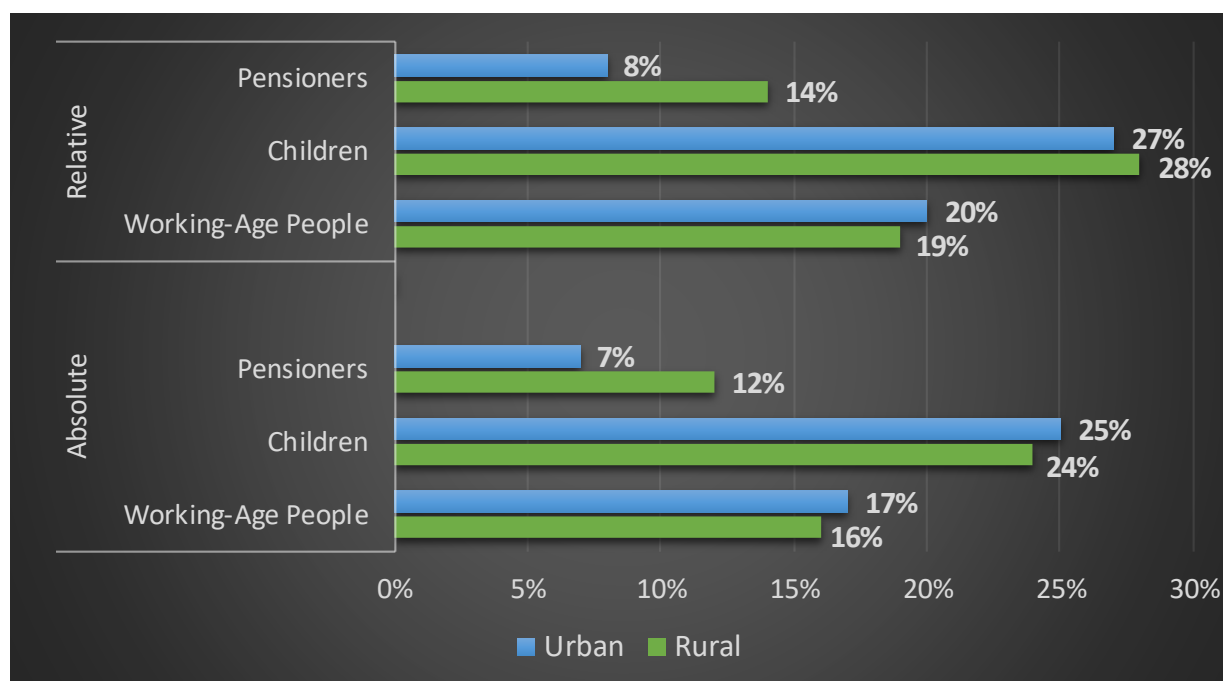
Figure 46: Proportion of Households in Poverty (after Housing Costs), Urban/Rural Comparison, 2018/19



Source: Households Below Average Income (HBAI), Department for Communities (DfC), 2018/19

Poverty levels in both children and adults of working age are very similar in urban and rural areas as a whole. However, the reverse is true for pensioners. Rural pensioners are almost twice as likely to be in relative or absolute poverty as their urban counterparts (Figure 47).

Figure 47: Proportion of Individuals in Poverty (after Housing costs), Urban/Rural Comparison, 2018/19



Source: Households Below Average Income (HBAI), DfC, 2018/19

Table 3: Social Welfare Benefit Claimants/Recipients, Urban/Rural Comparison, May 2020*

	DLA Recipients	PIP Claims in Payment	ESA Recipients	Carer's Allowance Recipients	Income Support Claimants	Pension Credit Claimants	Universal Credit Claimants
Urban	52,020	100,980	80,020	32,900	17,040	42,640	40,530
Rural	25,720	44,690	32,200	15,770	5,290	23,550	13,621
<i>Missing Postcode</i>	150	640	290	140	-	-	3,763
NI Total	77,900	146,310	112,510	48,810	22,450	66,260	57,914

*Universal Credit figures correct at February 2020.

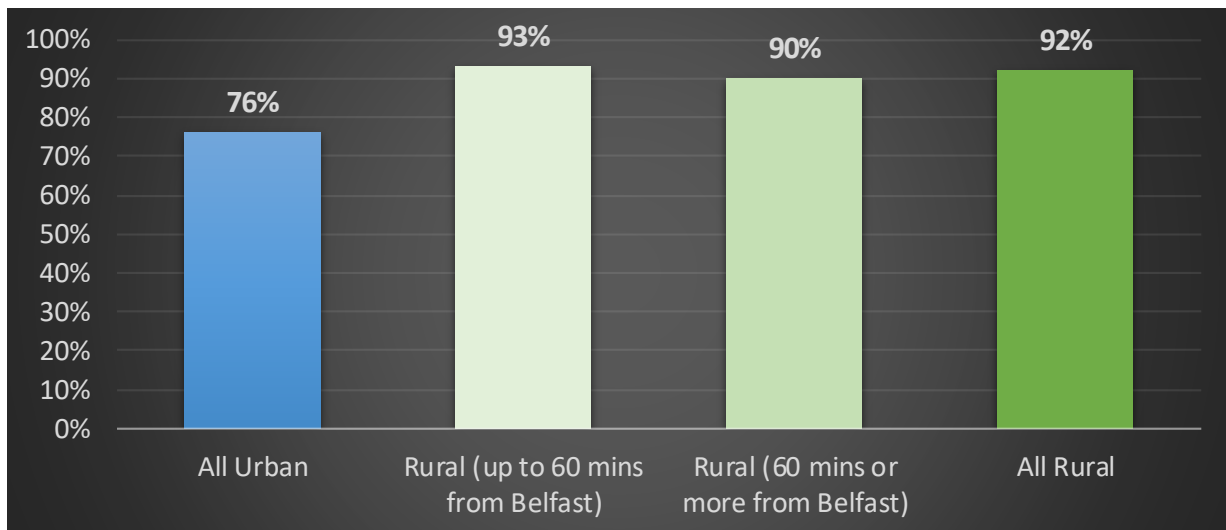
Data extracted from date of most recent published PSU data - DLA MIDAS Scan (30 May 2020), ESA MIDAS Scan (05 Jun 2020), CA MIDAS Scan (11 Jun 2020) and PIP CS History Scan (31 May 2020).

All figures except Universal Credit have been rounded to the nearest ten. Totals may not sum due to rounding. In producing this analysis, individual records were attributed to a LGD or as Urban/Rural on the basis of their postcode. Not all records can be correctly allocated using this method, and some cannot be allocated at all.

Source: Professional Services Unit (PSU), Department for Communities, 2020

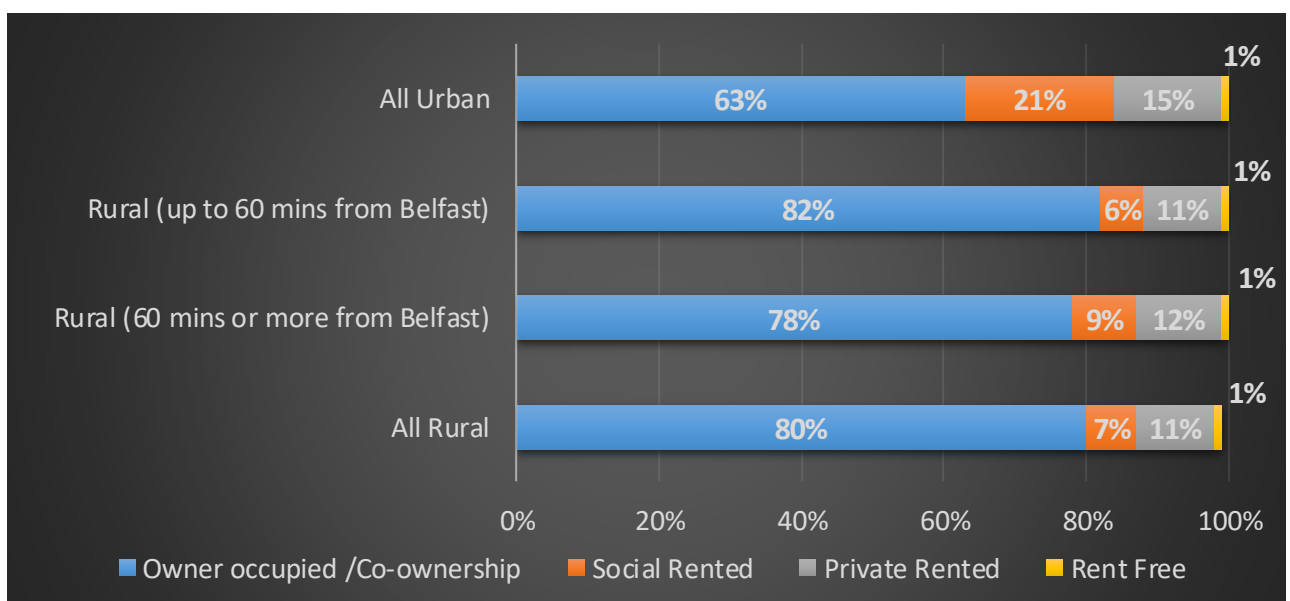
The cost of living is also higher in rural areas⁷ and rural households are twice as likely as urban households to be in fuel poverty - almost a third (32%) of rural households experience fuel poverty compared to 16% of those in urban areas.⁸ Private transport is also a necessity in many rural areas in terms of access to employment and basic services – 92% of rural households had access to at least one car or van in 2018/19 (Figure 48). As a result, vehicle ownership and running costs may consume a greater share of available household income.

Figure 48: Household Car/Van Ownership, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2018/19



Source: Continuous Household Survey, 2018/19, NISRA

Figure 49: Housing Tenure, Urban/Rural Comparison, 2018/19



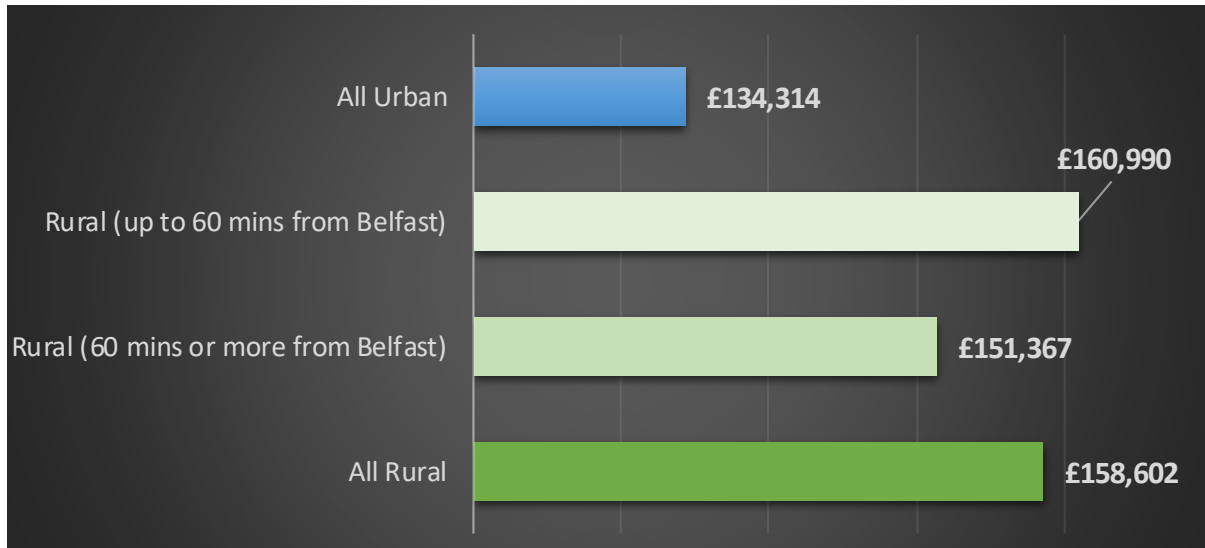
Source: Continuous Household Survey, 2018/19, NISRA

⁷A minimum income standard for rural areas, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2010

⁸ Northern Ireland House Condition Survey 2016, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, 2018

Access to social housing is much more limited, and rates of owner-occupation are substantially higher in rural (80%) than urban areas (63% - Figure 49). As of Quarter 1 in 2020, average house prices are also higher in rural than in urban areas, with property in rural areas within an hour's drive of Belfast most expensive of all (Figure 50). The extent of the combined economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the end of the EU Exit transition period on NI house prices remains to be seen.

Figure 50: Average House Prices (NI), Urban/Rural Comparison, Q1 2020



Source: NI House Price Index, Land and Property Services (LPS) NISRA, Q1 2020

Further Information

This publication provides an overview of the wide range of information collected across Government to support the development of rural policy. Further sources of information on rural NI are provided below.

Rural Statistics and Farmer Equality Indicators

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/rural-statistics-and-farmer-equality-indicators#toc-1>

Contains information on the farming population and rural/urban comparative data on demography, households below average income, the economy and labour market, earnings, industry, tourism, telecommunications, investment, health, education, housing, travel and transport, wellbeing and experience of crime

Rural Development

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/rural-development>

Rural Needs

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/rural-development/rural-needs>

'Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation'

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/rural-development/tackling-rural-poverty-and-social-isolation>

Rural Statistics and Farmer Equality Indicators

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Rural Development

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/rural-development>

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Research Reports

Skills, Education and Training: Results from the AFBI farm household survey: Jack, C, Anderson, D, Patten, N and Miller, C, AFBI, 2014

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dard/skills-education-and-training-results-from-the-afbi-farm-household-survey-2014.pdf>

On-Farm and Off-Farm Returns to Education among Farm Operators in Northern Ireland: A Non-Technical Summary and Policy Discussion Document: Jack, C and Wallace, M, AFBI, 2011

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dard/returns-to-education-report.pdf>



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