



Rural Economies Seminar

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Rural Services Network**

30th April 2025

Three Foundations for Unlocking Rural Prosperity



**Fairly Funded
Rural Public Services**



**Use of the right
measures & metrics
to understand rural
Challenges**



A Rural Specific Plan



**Fairly Funded
Rural Public Services**

In times of austerity and cutbacks, we believe at the RSN that it is even more important to fairly fund services, including those in rural communities.

Every Council deserves to have the resources it requires, to meet the needs of their community.

40% More



**Government Funded
Spending Power in urban
Councils is **40% MORE**
per head than in
predominantly Rural
Councils for 25-26**



Rural Residents
pay **20% more**
in Council tax
per head
compared to
Urban Residents



**Use of the right
measures & metrics
to understand rural
Challenges**

We must use the right metrics to understand the policy challenges in rural areas and be able to assess if policy interventions are working.

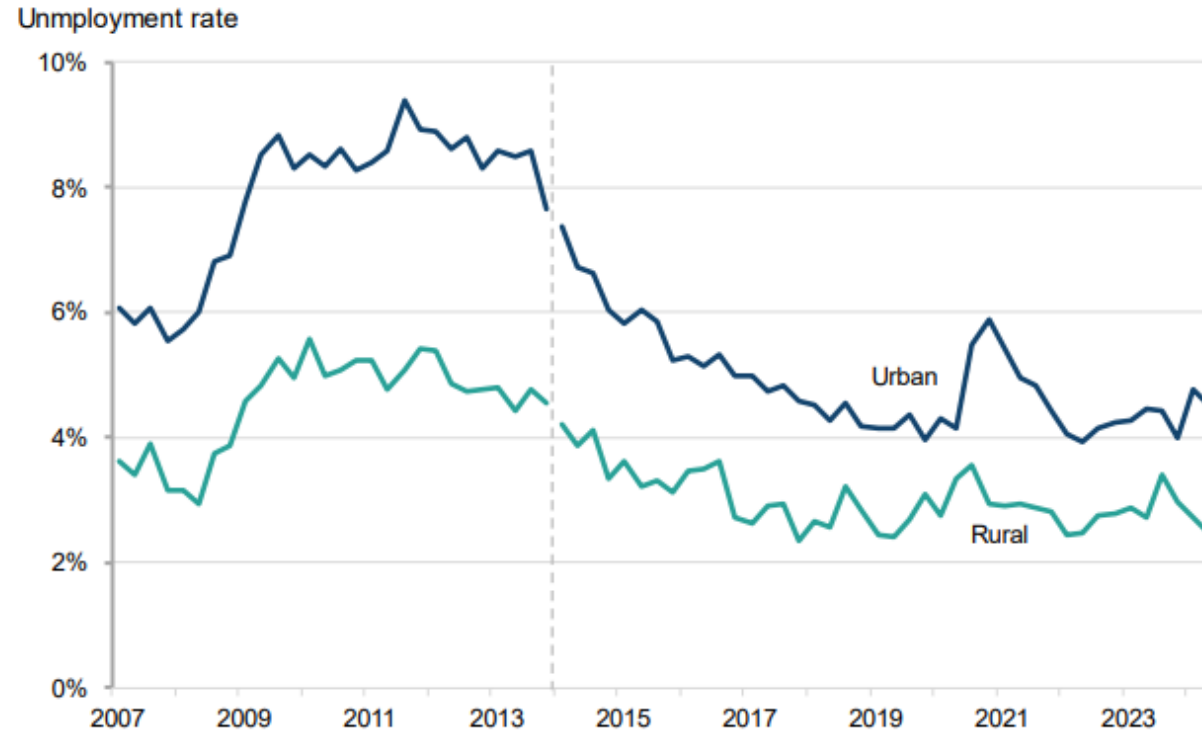
Our rural communities are diverse, and data that tries to capture these communities at a nation, regional or even local authority level often misses the reality of rural life.

There is a risk that metrics are designed to measure urban circumstances and are skewed against rural situations.

Unemployment in rural areas is generally lower than urban

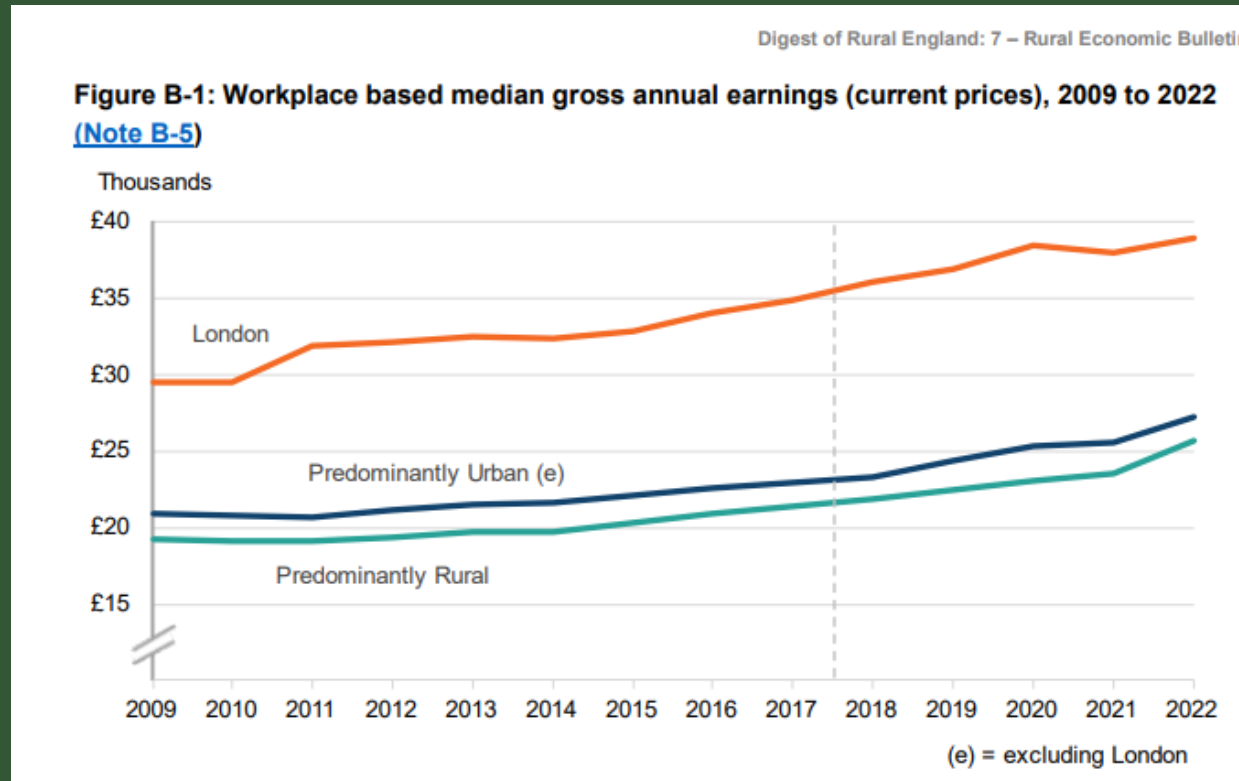
Figure A-3: Line chart showing unemployment as a percentage of those aged 16 and over, in England, Q1 2007 to Q2 2024 (Note A-2, Note A-7)

A change in the Rural-Urban Classification used is indicated by a vertical dashed grey line.



However...

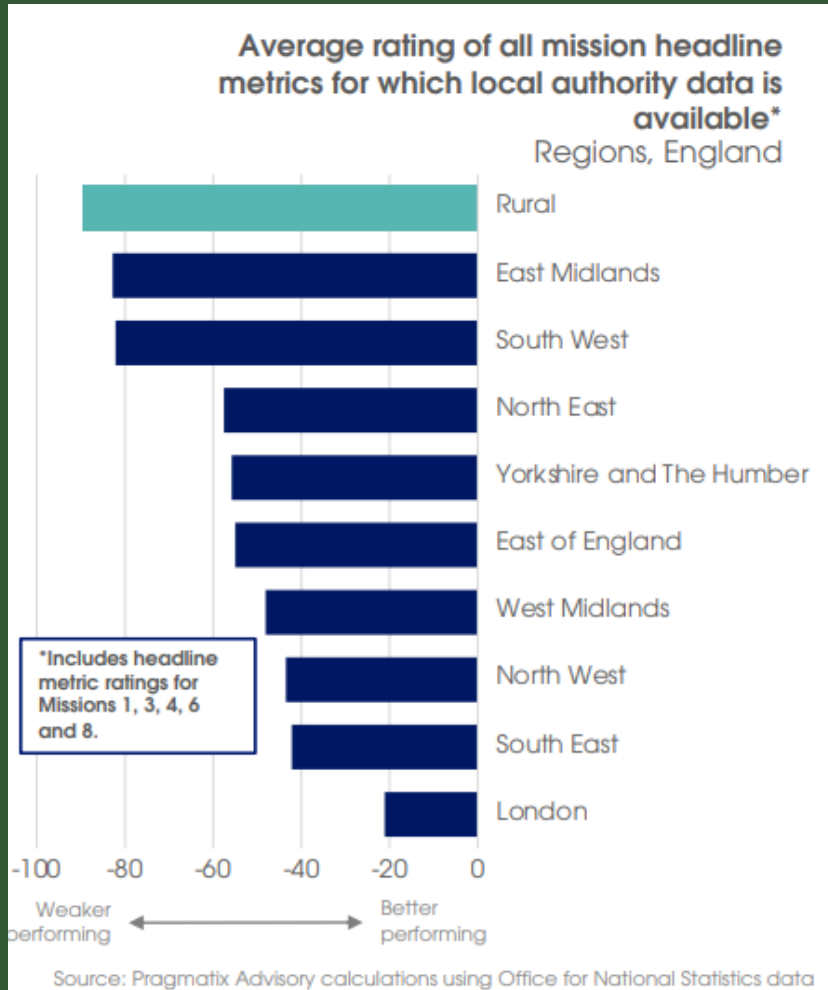
Wages earned in the rural economy are lower and the cost of living higher



Rural Economy

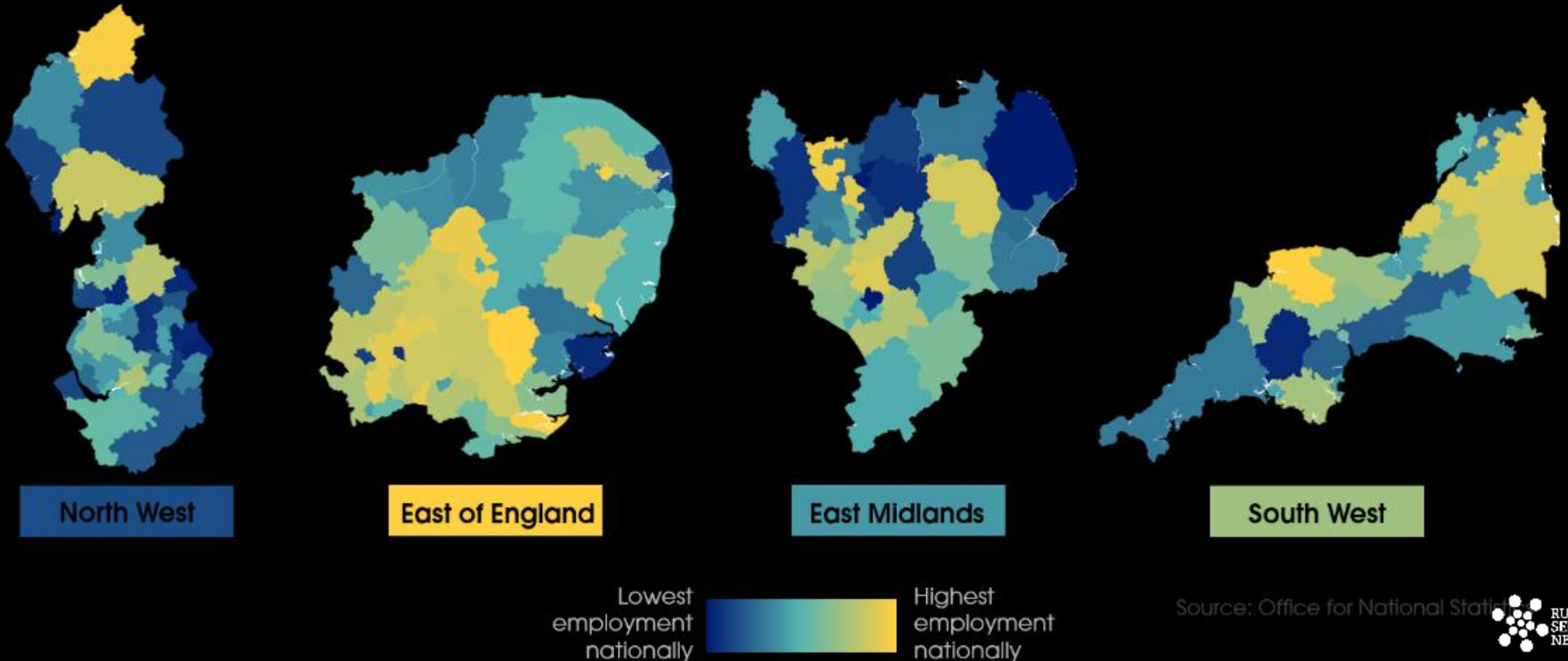
Were England's rural communities a distinct region, their need for Levelling Up would be **greater** than that of any other part of the country

<https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/hidden-region-rural-england-forgotten-in-governments-levelling-up-white-paper>

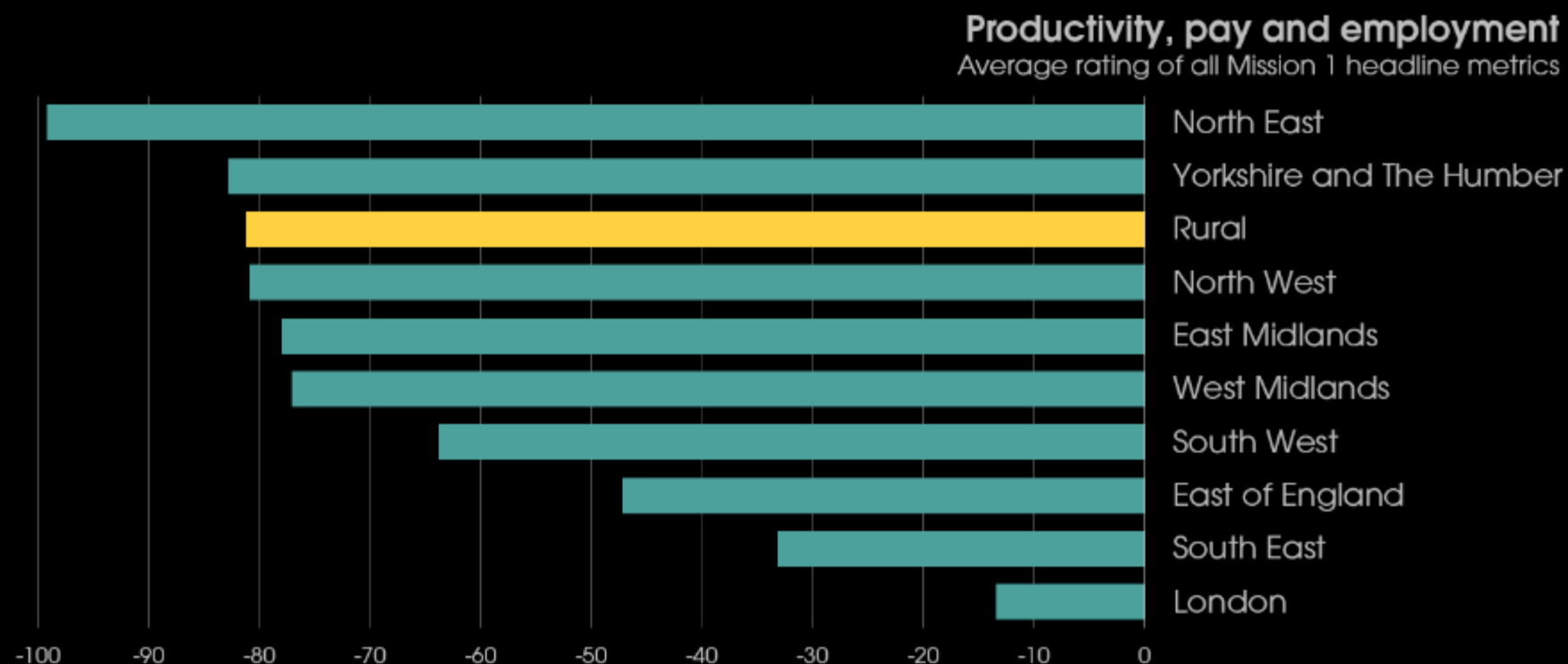


Differences within are greater than between regions

Employment rate for 16- to 64-year-olds
2021, per cent, national scale



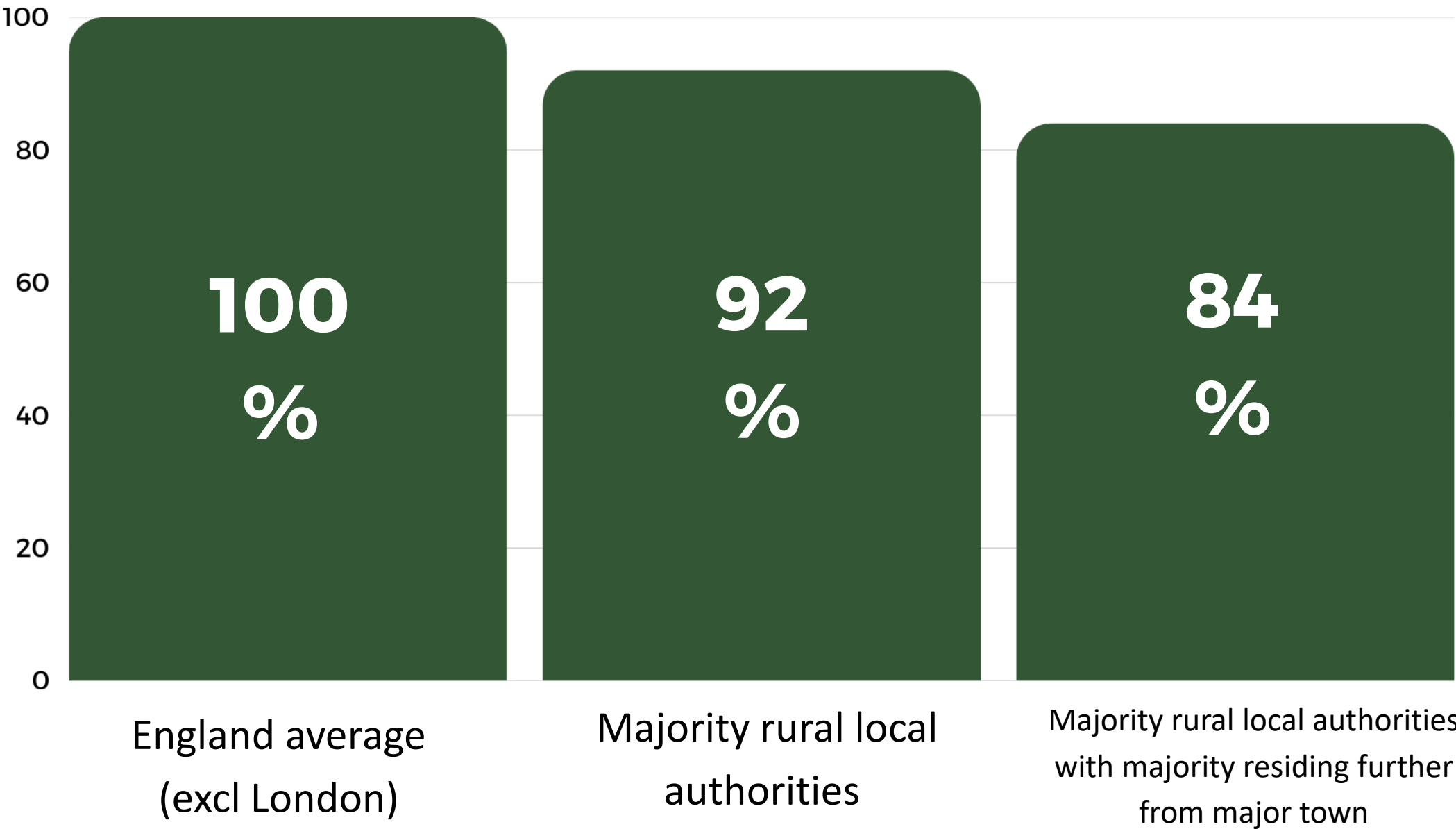
But there's also a serious economic gap to close



Source: Pragmatix Advisory calculations using Office for National Statistics data

Productivity can be 84% of England average in more remote rural areas

Productivity Levels measured by GVA



Challenges for the rural economy

Challenges for the Workforce	Challenges for the employers / businesses
Lack of affordable housing options	Lack of broadband / mobile signal for businesses to increase productivity/markets
Lack of Public Transport to access skills/training/education/employment	Suitably qualified workforce
Lack of Broadband / mobile connectivity to access skills/training/education	Lack of Infrastructure
Seasonal nature of tourist industry	Less ability to work within economies of scale

Rural Growth Must Power National Renewal

Unlocking rural potential is key to national progress.



Productivity in Rural Areas

Now just

84%

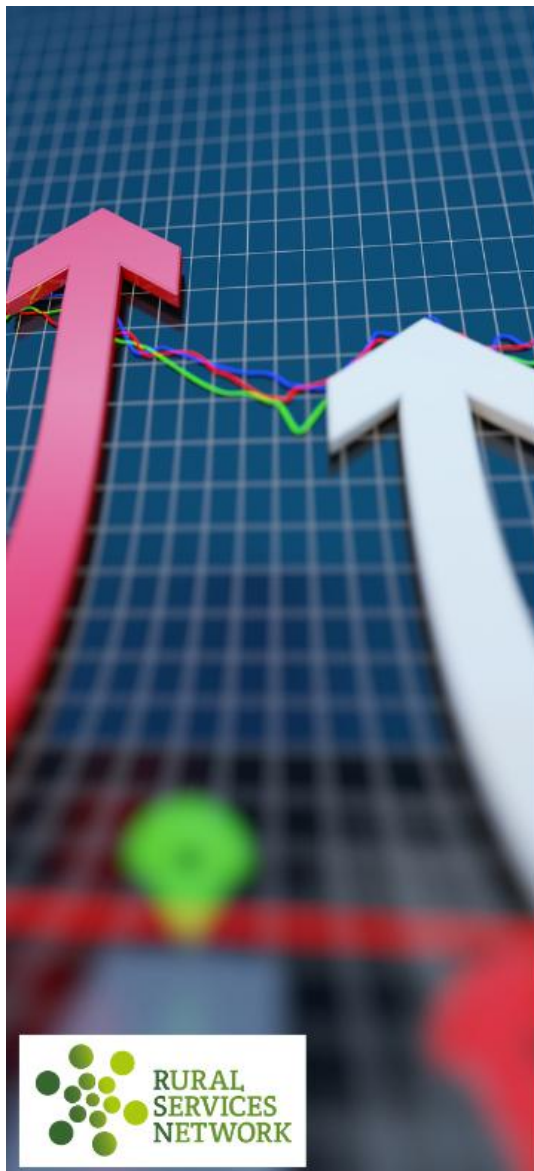
Of the National
Average



Down from 92% in
2001.

Source: DEFRA, Economic Bulletin, April 2025





With The Right Investment

Rural areas could add

£19
BILLION

Annually to the
national economy 

Source: Reigniting Rural Futures, The Rural Coalition, 2024

RURAL ECONOMY: A SLEEPING GIANT WORTH £19 BILLION



The report shows that with the right policy framework, the rural economy could increase productivity significantly, leading to an additional £9 billion to £19 billion per year in tax revenues.

This growth would not only support rural communities but also have far-reaching benefits for the national economy, helping to fund essential public services and drive broader economic initiatives.



Policy must be designed to meet rural needs, not a one size fits all approach, but targeted at overcoming barriers that prevent rural from thriving.

