



Campaigning on your behalf

**Kerry Booth, Chief Executive
Rural Services Network**

28th April 2025



Building on these foundations, the Government has five national missions that set the direction of change.

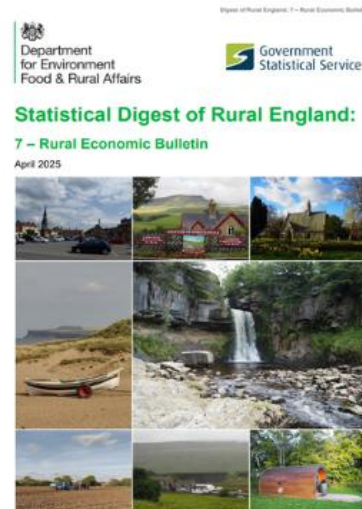
- Kickstart Economic Growth
- Build an NHS fit for the future
- Safer Streets
- Break down the barriers to opportunity
- Make Britain a clean energy superpower

Three Foundations for Unlocking Rural Prosperity

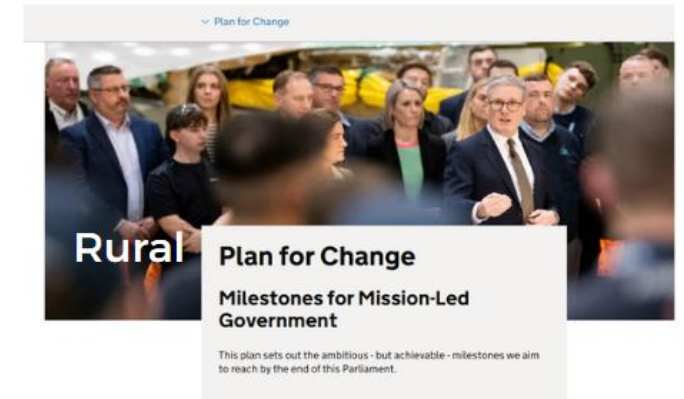
**Fairly Fund
Rural Public Services**



**Use right measures and
metrics to understand
rural challenges**



Rural specific plan



Fairly Fund Rural Public Services

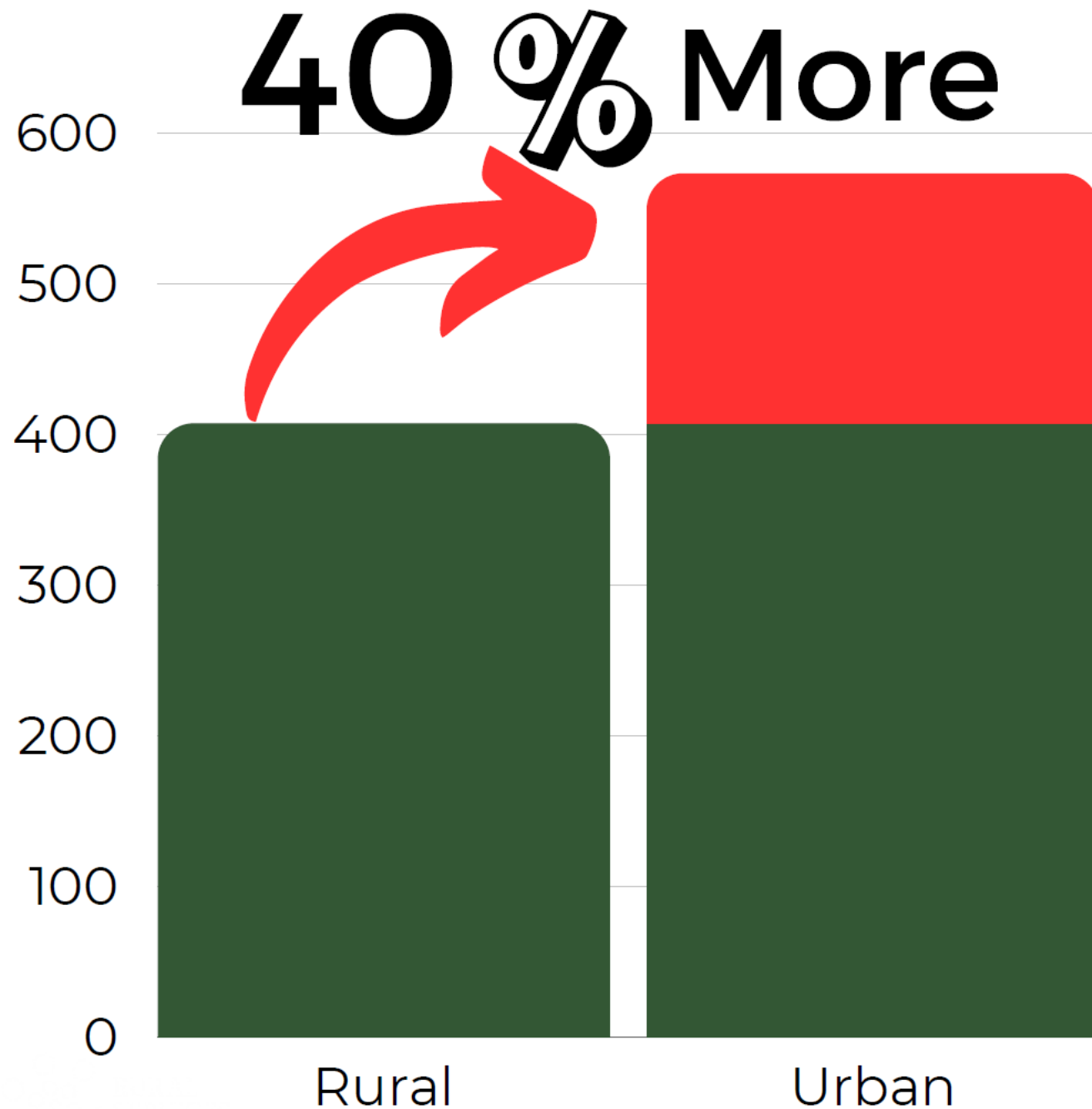


In times of austerity and cutbacks, we believe at the RSN that it is even more important to fairly fund services, including those in rural communities.

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

A close-up photograph of several stacks of gold coins, likely 10 Euro coins, arranged in a row. The coins are stacked high, with some stacks being taller than others. The lighting is soft, highlighting the metallic texture and the ridged edges of the coins. The background is blurred, focusing attention on the stacks of money.

**The Rural Services Network
is fighting for a fair deal for
rural communities, in all
public sector funding**

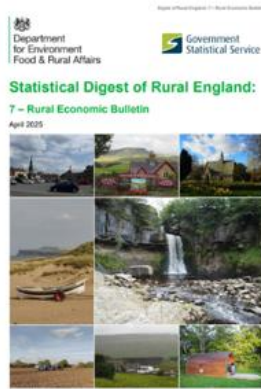


**Government Funded
Spending Power in urban
Councils is **40% MORE**
per head than in
predominantly Rural
Councils for 25-26**



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

Use right measures and 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.

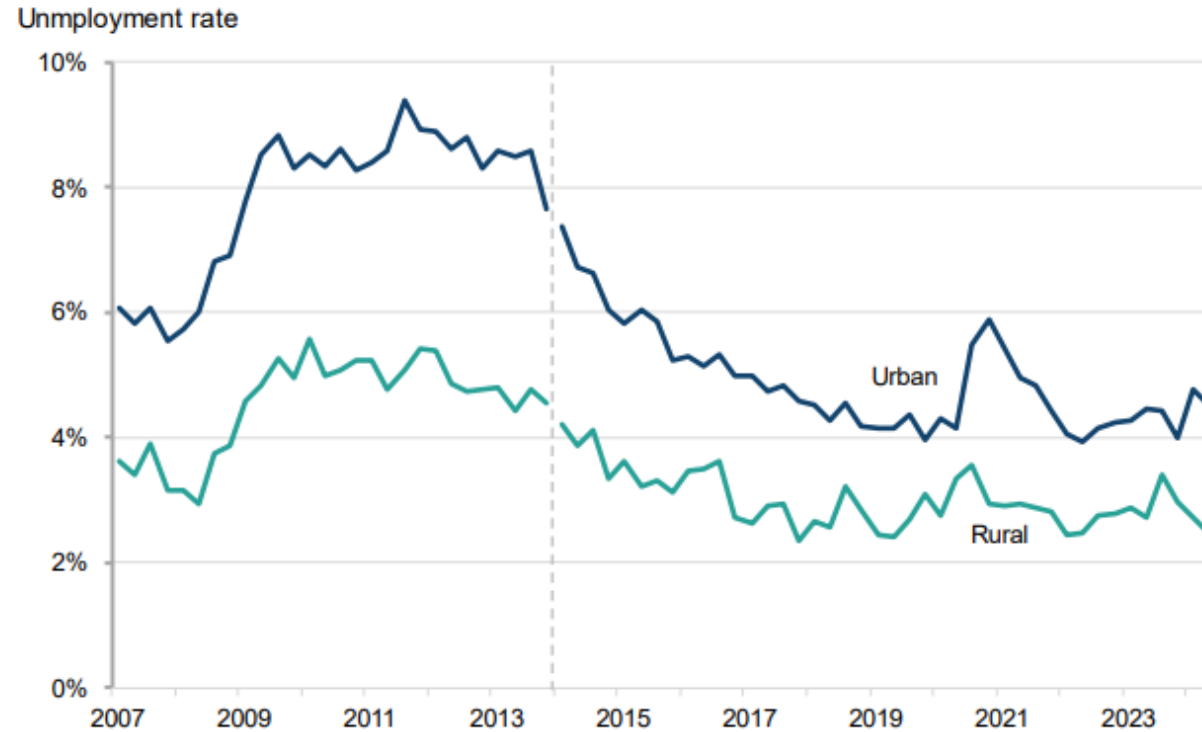
Our rural communities are diverse, and data that tries to capture these communities at a nation, regional or even local authority level often misses the reality of rural life.

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

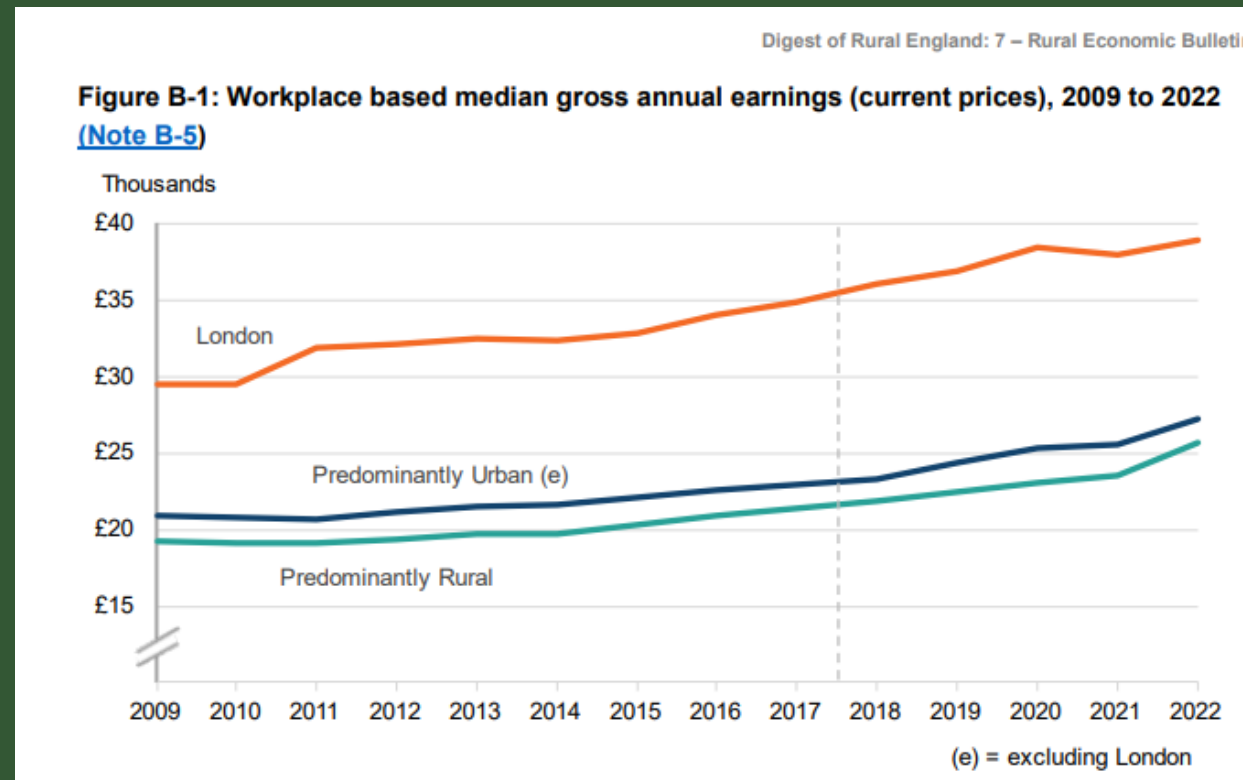
Figure A-3: Line chart showing unemployment as a percentage of those aged 16 and over, in England, Q1 2007 to Q2 2024 (Note A-2, Note A-7)

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



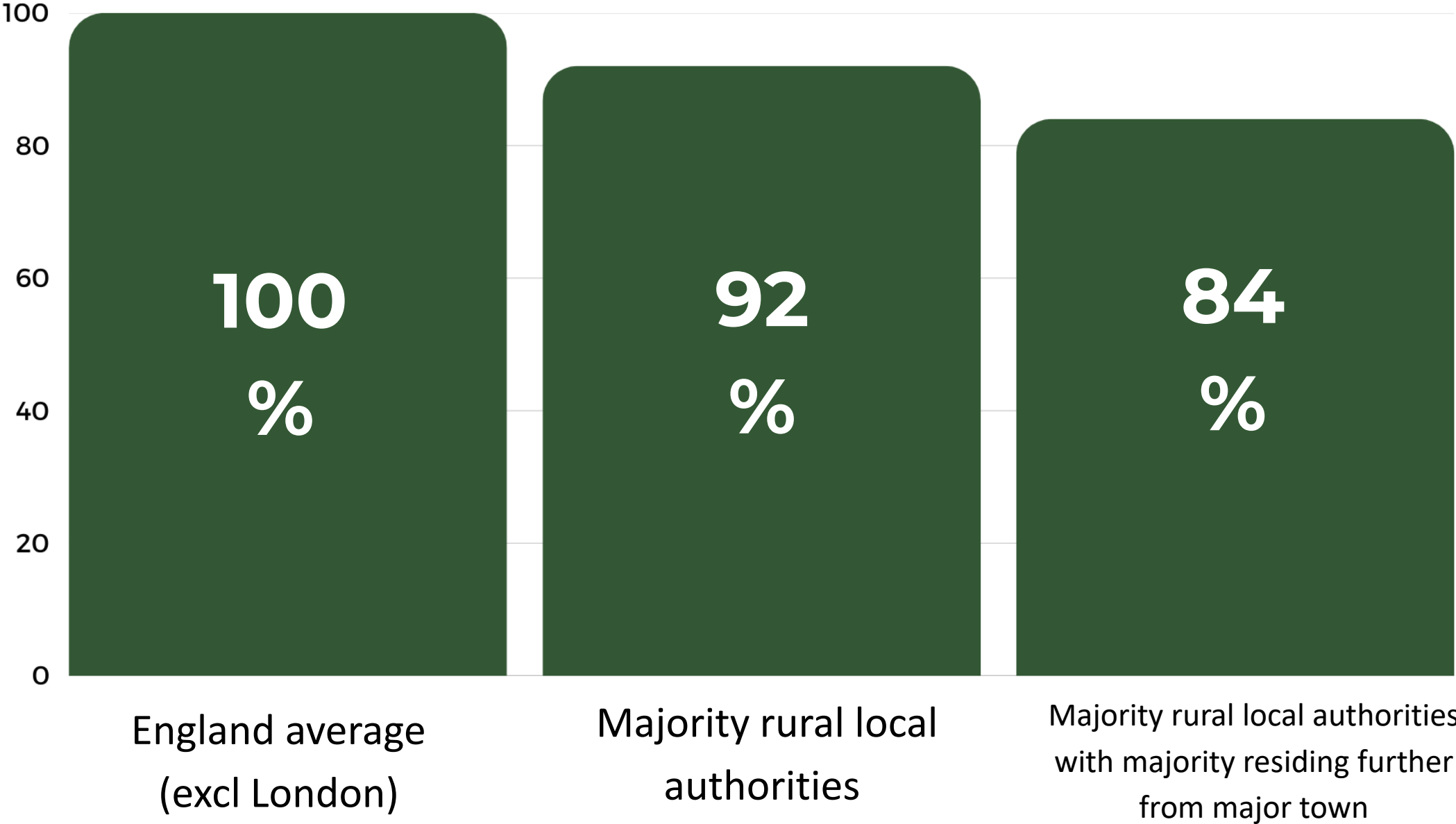
However...

Wages earned in the rural economy are lower



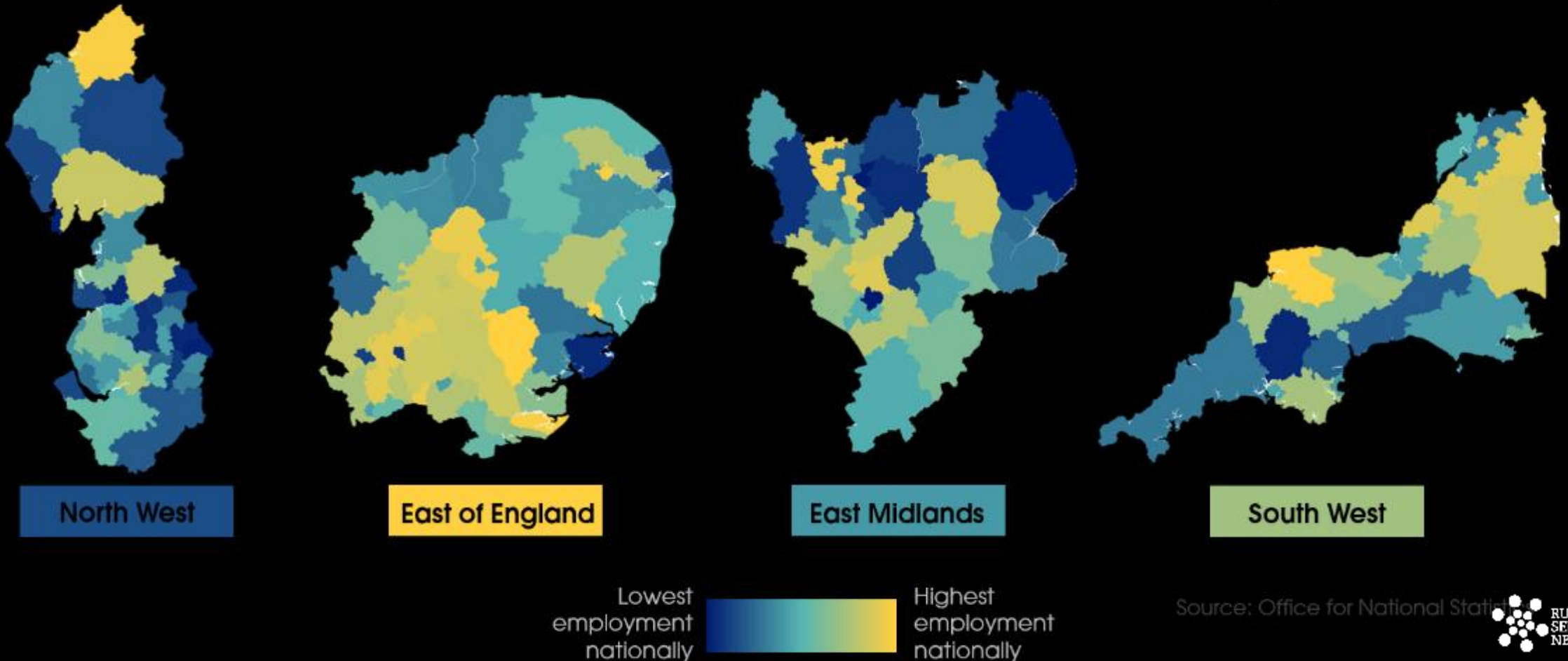
Productivity can be 84% of England average
in more remote rural areas

Productivity Levels measured by GVA

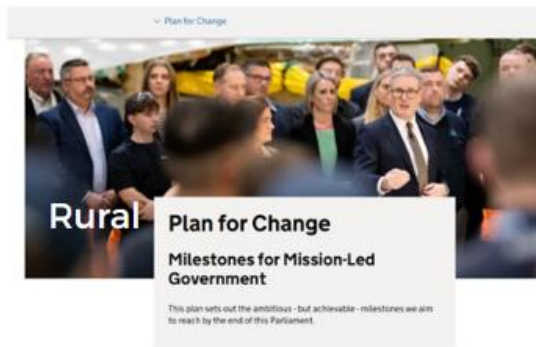


Differences within are greater than between regions

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



Rural specific plan



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.

Plan for change

- The Government will deliver housing of every tenure in the right places, supporting **our towns and cities** to grow, and providing the homes people want near to businesses and employment opportunities
- We will also begin building the next generation of **new towns**, including delivering major urban extensions and unblocking development where it has stalled.
- Powers to combat anti-social behaviour and shoplifting have been weakened, leaving our **town centres** exposed. Businesses on our high streets need crime down too.
- The presence of neighbourhood officers will deter and drive down incidents of anti-social behaviour, and officers will be equipped with powers to issue Respect Orders to ban persistent offenders from **town centres**.
- Police back on the beat: a neighbourhood policing team in every local area, carrying out intelligence-led and visible patrols, including in **town centres** and on high streets.

Plan for change

- Villages – no mention
- Rural – no mention
- Hamlet – no mention
- Sparsity – no mention



NPPF Consultation – 106 questions

1254
responses

Question 54 – What measures should we consider to better support and increase rural affordable housing?

Govt response

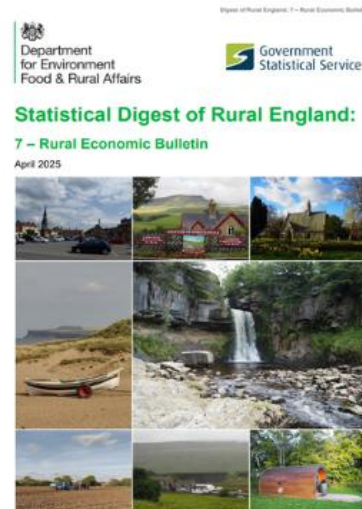
- The government is aware of higher costs of delivery in rural areas and we want to see more affordable housing in these areas as part of our ambition to deliver the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation.
- We recognise the strong support that was given to rural exception sites and the potential for encouraging them to be brought forward in greater numbers.
- We are committed to improving the quality of life for people living and working in rural areas. We intend to give further consider to how policy can better promote rural affordable housing and wider exceptions site policy as part of our work to produce a set of national policies for decision making in 2025.

Three Foundations for Unlocking Rural Prosperity

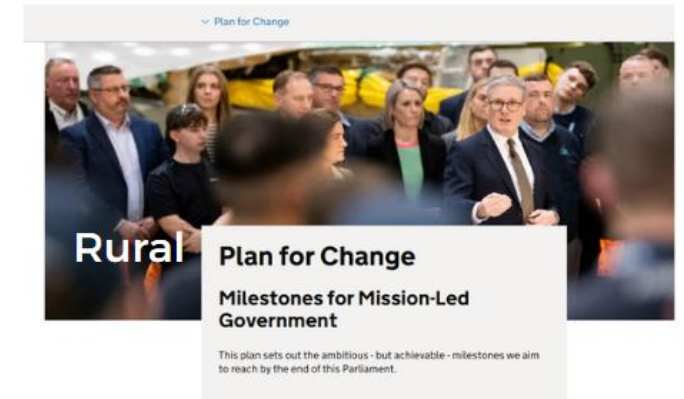
**Fairly Fund
Rural Public Services**



**Use right measures and
metrics to understand
rural challenges**



Rural specific plan





Houses in rural areas are **less affordable** to purchase for those in the bottom 25% of earners compared to urban areas.



Source: Statistical Digest of Rural England, November 2023

Rural Affordable Housing

Holiday homes are 'hollowing out' coastal areas, says MP

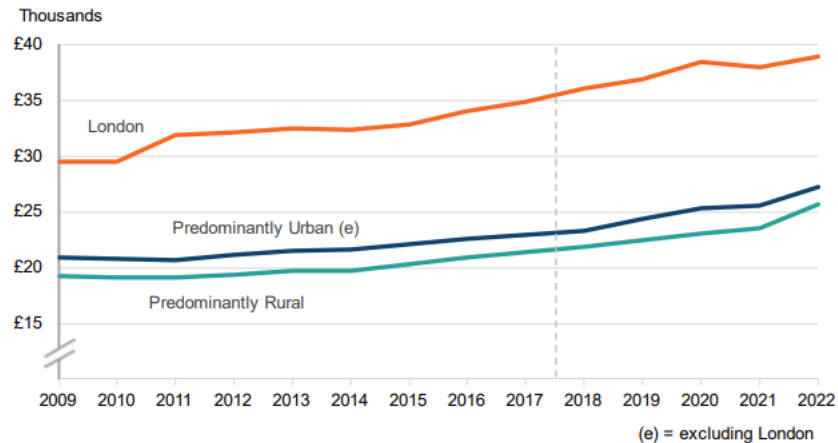
Labour MP Luke Pollard says Covid-19 has 'turbo-charged' housing crisis in rural and coastal towns



Whitby residents have voted overwhelmingly for curbs on second homes. Photograph: Edwin Remsburg/Getty Images
Coastal communities are being "hollowed out irretrievably" by a surge in holiday homes, an MP has warned, as new figures showed more than 17,000 properties in England have been "flipped" into short-term lets since Covid-19.

Annual price paid for terrace or semi-detached house in rural areas is higher in rural areas compared to urban (outside of London)

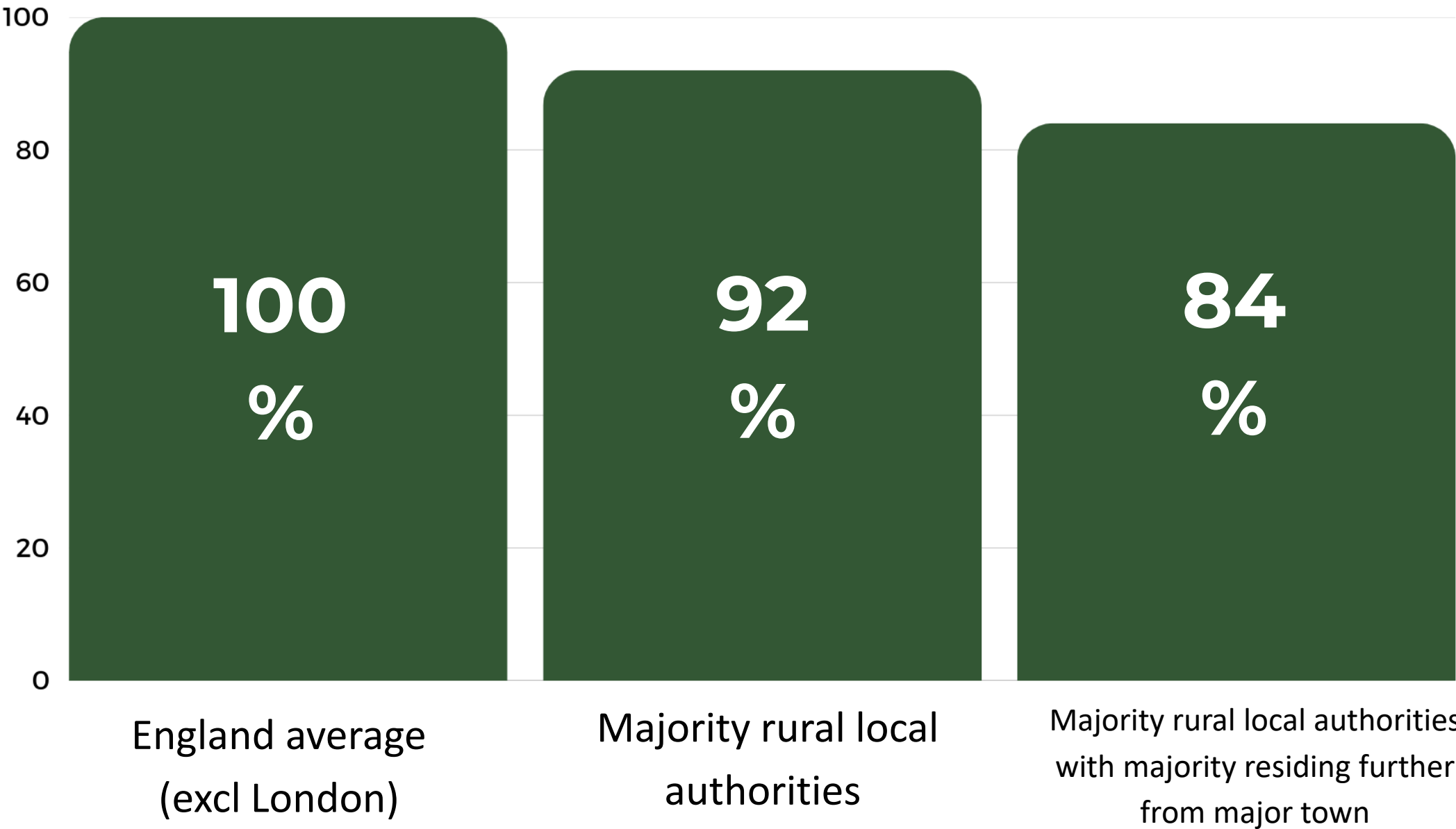
Figure B-1: Workplace based median gross annual earnings (current prices), 2009 to 2022
(Note B-5)



Wages earned in rural areas are lower than in urban areas, and the cost of living in rural areas is higher.

Proportionally more homeless Rural households in 2022/23 than in 2018/19

Productivity Levels measured by GVA



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.

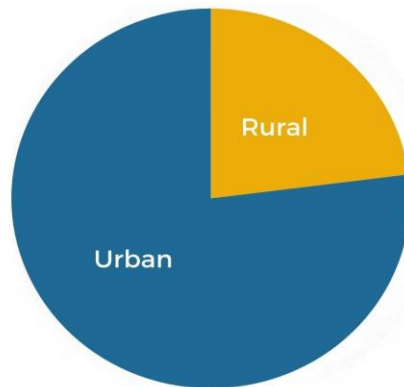
This growth would not only support rural communities but also have far-reaching benefits for the national economy, helping to fund essential public services and drive broader economic initiatives.

Rural Transport



Research suggests that about **1 in 4** bus routes have **ceased** in county and rural areas over the eleven years from 2010/11 to 2021/22.

Source: <https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk>



Urban councils budget to spend **3.4 times more** than rural on public transport.

Source: RSN analysis of Revenue Account Budget, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities 2024/25

Over the decade from 2013 to 2023, bus vehicle mileage in predominantly rural areas **declined**.

Local authority-subsidised services

↓ % **19**

Commercial services

↓ % **47**



Source: DfT Public Service Vehicle Survey - Bus Statistics, Annual bus statistics, year ending: March 2023 data tables

Urban areas (excluding London) have **double** the number of taxis and private hire vehicles as a proportion of population than rural areas.



Rural - 2.6 per thousand people



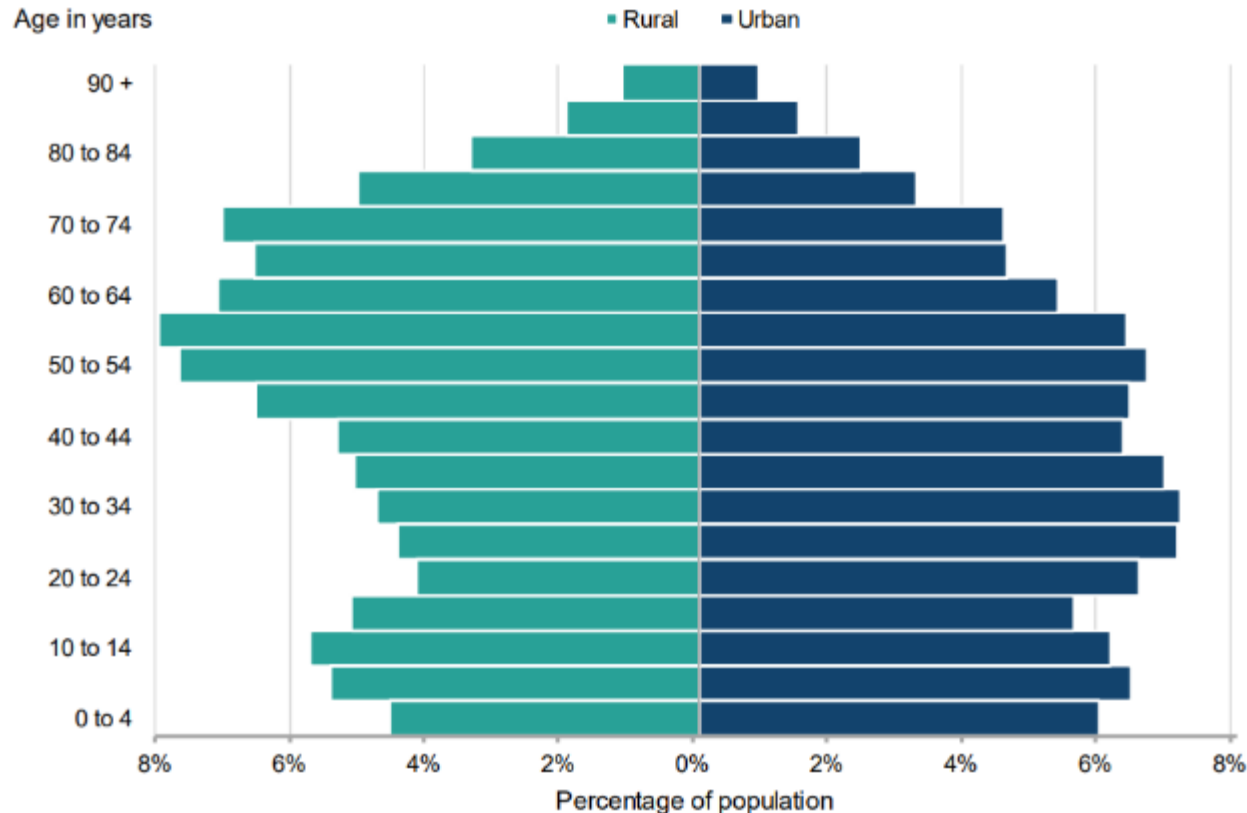
Urban - 5.5 per thousand people

Source: RSN analysis of Taxi and PHV Licensing Authorities, DfT July 2024

Access to Rural Health and Care Services

Figure B-1: Percentage of population within age bands of 5-year intervals from 0 to 90+, by Rural-Urban Classification in England based on LSOA level data, 2020

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacks in the bars



Rural areas have an ageing population which places additional demands on services

Isolation and lack of public transport - leading to mental health concerns; distance from services; the nature and quality of the housing stock.

Urban areas receive 16% MORE in social care grant than rural areas

Rural Net Zero

The rural fuel poverty gap is nearly **double** the national average.



Source: Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, Fuel Poverty Supplementary Tables 2023



In 2023 there were 10 times **fewer** electric buses/coaches in rural areas per head of population than in urban areas.

Source: RSN analysis of Western Power Distribution, 2023



In January 2025, the number of public charging devices available per 10,000 households with access to a car/van



Almost 70% more public charging devices available in urban areas

DEFRA Rural Digest 2025

Rural households emissions are higher than urban households.



↑ 19%

Source: Rural Net Zero, The role of Rural Local Authorities in reaching Net Zero Researched and produced by Quantum Strategy & Technology Ltd for UK100's Countryside Climate Network 2021/22

25% of rural homes are not connected to the gas network



The Rural Reality

Rural Connectivity

There remains 3% of indoor premises in rural areas that have no coverage from **any** operator of 4G services.



Source: Ofcom - Connected Nations Spring 2024 Interactive Report

Only **47%** of rural premises (commercial and residential) have Gigabit capability.



Source: Ofcom - Connected Nations Spring 2024 Interactive Report

11% of rural premises in England still cannot access a superfast broadband connection.



Source: Ofcom - Connected Nations Spring 2024 Interactive Report

A greater proportion of the working population work from home in rural areas of England than in urban. And for many, digital connectivity will be an essential element of their work.



Rural
26.8%



Urban
21.8%

Source: Statistical Digest of Rural England, Connectivity and Accessibility, 2021 & June 2024 analysis of ONS, Labour Force Survey

The Rural Reality

Residential Superfast Coverage

	Total	Urban	Rural
England	98%	99%	90%

Residential Gigabit Capable Coverage

“The coverage of gigabit-capable broadband networks – which includes hybrid fibre coaxial (HFC) cable in addition to full fibre – has grown to reach 83% or 25 million residential premises in the UK by July 2024. This suggests the Government’s target of 85% coverage by 2025 is likely to be reached. “ Connected Nations 2024

	Total	Urban	Rural
England	84%	88%	54%

Rural Planning

Key to ensuring we get the right homes in the right places with the right access to infrastructure



Thank you for listening