

Rural Scotland Key Facts Consultation Findings

1. Background

The [Rural Scotland Key Facts](#) (RSKF) is a Scottish Government National Statistics publication. Its purpose is to summarise key facts related to main policy areas and to inform mainstreaming of rural policies. Improving the evidence base will assist us in understanding the issues affecting rural Scotland. The RSKF is a compendium publication which presents a collection of statistics from a range of surveys and administrative databases. The publication presents a snapshot of the latest statistics available at the time of publication.

It has been published since 2004 and became a National Statistics publication in 2008. The RSKF was published annually between 2004 and 2012. Following the publication of the 2012 edition of the RSKF the decision was made to change the frequency of the publication to a biennial basis.

The characteristics between urban and rural areas do not change markedly year on year so moving to a biennial basis would not affect the quality of the available data. Users of the RSKF were notified of the change. In addition, the [Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification](#) (SGURC) is updated every two years so the new publication schedule of the RSKF allowed each edition to be based on an updated version of the SGURC. However, due to delays in the release of the SGURC the next edition of the RSKF was not published until 2015 as opposed to in 2014.

We are committed to making future updates to this publication and the next edition of the RSKF will be published later in 2018. The next edition should have been published in 2017 but was delayed due to issues with data that feed into the SGURC. This resulted in a delay in the release of the new version of the SGURC.

In advance of this update we are keen to ensure that the publication continues to meet user needs. Where topics are of little or no interest for users we would prefer to reduce or delete these topics and concentrate on producing the information which is most relevant to users. We last consulted users in 2010 and so the purpose of this current consultation was to establish how users' needs have changed in the intervening years.

A user consultation exercise was run from 24th of May to 22nd June 2018, the aim of which was to gather information on users' needs and wants from the publication and to seek suggestions for new content. The consultation took the form of an online survey using Questback. A link to the survey was distributed to [ScotStat](#) subscribers who had expressed an interest in rural issues (approximately 500) as well as being sent directly to some stakeholders (approximately 20). Comments via email were also invited. The set of questions included in the consultation are in [Annex 1](#).

In total, seven responses were received. This low number means that the results should not be taken as representative of all users. However, the comments provided give us an opportunity to discuss the practicality of any suggested changes.

2. Results

Organisation/background of respondents, purpose and frequency of use (Questions 1, 2 and 3)

The backgrounds of respondents were: local government, other public body, voluntary organisation and private individual (one respondent each) and an academic institution (two respondents).

Table 1 – Frequency of use by organisation

Organisation Type	Monthly	Quarterly	Other	Total
Central government	0	0	0	0
Local government	0	0	1	1
Other public body	0	0	1	1
Academic institution	1	1	0	2
Voluntary organisation	0	1	0	1
Private organisation	0	0	0	0
Private individual	1	0	1	2
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	2	2	3	7

No respondents make use of the publication more frequently than monthly. The 'Other' category consisted of a local government respondent and a private individual using the publication whenever a new edition was released and one (from other public body) who commented they had found the report for the first time.

Table 2 – Reason for use of the publication

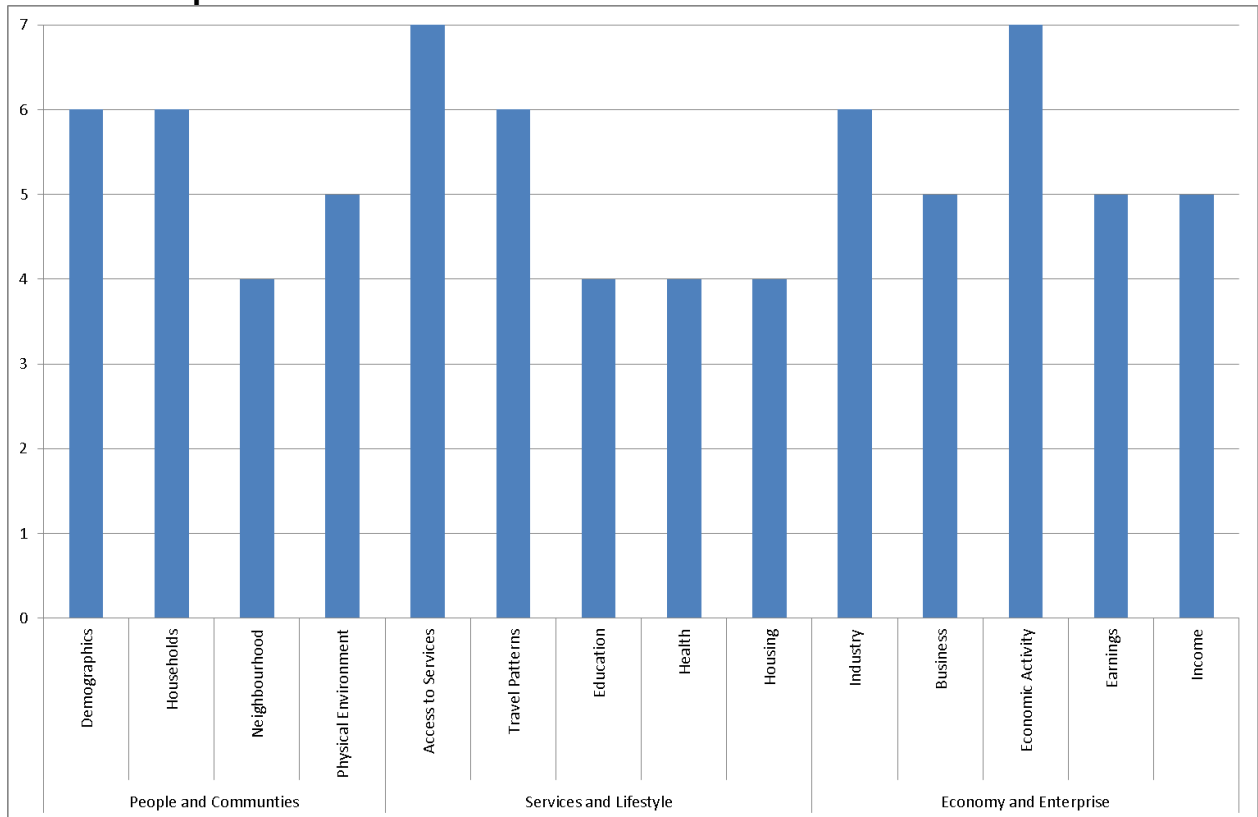
Reason for use	Number of responses
Policy development	1
Combining with other statistics	4
Statistical analysis	4
Research	6
Media Briefing	1
General interest	5

Counts will sum to more than seven as respondents could tick more than one option.

The most common reasons for using the publication were "research" and "general interest".

Topics of Interest and Additional Topics to Include – questions 4 to 9

Chart 1 – Topics of interest



Note that in the chart the category labels used for some topics of interest are shortened from the full category names used in the publication and consultation.

Each topic was of interest to at least four respondents. The topics ‘Access and Convenience of Services’ and ‘Economic Activity’ were of interest to all seven respondents.

Respondents were then asked to select their top three topics, indicate which topics they would prefer to be dropped from the publication and suggest additional topics to be included. Only two topics were selected for dropping, ‘Physical Environment’ and ‘Travel Patterns’, receiving one response each.

The suggested additional topics were:

- Community cohesion/spirit and community resilience;
- More indicators of wellbeing and levels of inequality;
- Migration and commuting patterns;
- More on gender differences within each area across various topics (earnings, employment rates, etc.);
- The third sector and its role in providing services;
- Activities of Community Councils and/or Development Trusts;
- Community Land ownership and rural policy outside the Rural Development Programme.

For any these topics to be included in future publications we would need to identify suitable sources of statistics which could be broken-down by urban-rural classification.

Community owned land is included as one of the indicators in the new [National Performance Framework](#) which was launched in June 2018. Experimental statistics on community ownership were first published in December 2017. The Estimate of Community Owned Land in Scotland 2017 publication can be accessed here: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/12/1288>

Work is on-going to improve the quality of these statistics with an update expected to be published in later in 2018.

The current [Equality Evidence Finder](#) also provides rural statistics broken down by socio-economic characteristics.

There is no comprehensive system which registers migration within Scotland. Instead it is estimated by the [National Records of Scotland](#) using the NHS Central Register (NHSCR) for migration between NHS health board areas and Community Health Index (CHI) database for migration between local authorities. There is not currently a source of statistics for migration between urban and rural areas.

Concerning community cohesion, services provided by the third sector (voluntary), community councils and development trusts we are not aware of a source of statistics for these topics which would be suitable for inclusion in RSKF. However the [Scottish Household Survey](#) (SHS) does collect information on individuals' participation in formal voluntary work, meaning unpaid help to organisations or groups. This includes the type of organisation to which unpaid help is given, the type of activity that help consists of, and a comparison of rates of participation in formal voluntary work in urban and rural areas. SHS also collects information on the availability of informal voluntary care from relatives or friends.

Table 3 – Top three topics of interest

Topic Area	First topic	Second topic	Third topic
Demographics	1	0	2
Households	0	1	0
Physical Environment	1	0	0
Access and Convenience of Services	0	3	0
Health	1	0	1
Industry	1	0	2
Business	2	1	0
Economic Activity	0	2	2
Income	1	0	0

User Satisfaction and Publication Frequency – Questions 10 and 11

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with different aspects of RSKF (Table 4). All respondents rated them either positively or neutrally.

Table 4 – Satisfaction with Publication

Rating	Meet user needs	Accuracy	Timeliness	Clear Presentation	Easy to find
Very satisfied	0	3	0	2	1
Satisfied	6	3	5	5	5
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1	1	2	0	1
Dissatisfied	0	0	0	0	0
Very dissatisfied	0	0	0	0	0

Concerning the publication frequency, five respondents indicated they were happy with the current biennial publication and two indicated they would like the publication to be annual.

We are keen to find out what additional sources of rural statistics users are consulting. Six respondents provided the following material, some of which has relevance to, but is not necessarily a source of, rural statistics:

- OFCOM <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/features-and-news/rural-broadband-volunteers>
- [Scottish Public Health Observatory](#)
- [NHS National Services Scotland – Information Services Division](#)
- [Scottish Government](#)
- [Department for Work and Pensions](#)
- Various datasets - *often requires linking rural indicator to relevant geography(e.g. local authority statistics).*
- [Statistics Scotland](#). *The specific data sources used to get information at a local authority level and where possible at smaller geographies.*
- [Economic Report on Scottish Agriculture](#)
- [National Records of Scotland](#)
- [NOMIS – Official Labour Market Statistics](#)

Users were asked to describe any improvements they would like to see in the format of the RSKF. Comments requested the rural statistics to be presented for each local authority and to include data for the ‘Accessible Small Towns’ and ‘Remote Small Towns’ separately from the ‘Rest of Scotland’ category.

Whilst many Scottish Government statistics are available broken down by local authority, and we recognise this is something which many users find useful, it is not possible for us to provide breakdowns by local authority for statistics in the RSKF. This is because local authorities cannot be assigned to a single category of the three-fold SGURC (‘Remote Rural’, ‘Accessible Rural’ and ‘Rest of Scotland’) as within each local authority there exist many differently classified data zones.

An alternative urban rural definition, the Randall Definition originally produced in 1985, classifies local authorities as urban/rural based on population density. Those local authorities with an average of less than one person per hectare classified as rural. However, where population density varies considerably, this definition may classify a local authority as urban when there are significant pockets of rural land within it.

The website www.statistics.gov.scot presents a wide range of statistics by various geographies (e.g. local authority, data zone) and includes many of the data items which feature in RSKF.

The rationale given for including 'Small Towns' in rural areas was:

"In my own research my preference has been to align the small towns with the rural areas which surround them. I feel small towns more often function as part of the rural economy, rather than as part of "urban" Scotland. I would suspect that separating the small towns from urban Scotland in the graphs and tables could change the interpretation of at least some of the themes."

The current classification considers only settlements with a population of under 3,000 to be rural. Whilst it may be possible to separately include 'Small Towns', that is with a population of between 3,000 and 10,000, there would need to be sufficient interest from users in this new definition for us to consider making this change to future publications.

In the meantime, anyone desiring an alternative breakdown of urban rural statistics can make a data request to the organisation which produces them. Details of these organisations are provided in the 'Sources' section of the RSKF publication.

3. Suggestions on the Format and Content of the Booklet (Questions 7 and 11)

When asked about publishing in alternative hard copy formats, four respondents reported they were content with the current 'pocket book' format and three suggested using A4 format. Using alternative formats will however increase the cost of producing this publication and so we would need to be sure this would have a sufficient benefit to users to justify the expense.

Users were asked for any further comments on the RSKF and these focussed on how important and useful the publication was.

5. Conclusions

Respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the various aspects of the publication (meeting needs, timeliness, accuracy) and showed little evidence that any topics should be dropped from future publications. It is of note that many of these rural statistics are used in conjunction with sources of statistics from other topic areas. Regarding potential changes to future publications whilst for technical

reasons we are unable to include breakdowns by local authority, we are open to including additional topics in future publications given a suitable source of statistics.

We would like to thank everyone who has taken an interest in the RSKF publication and for taking the time to take part in the consultation. The consultation responses received have been extremely useful and have proved invaluable in learning what is important to the users of the publication.

Please note all future plans for the development of the RSKF are subject to the availability of sufficient resources.

If you would like to make any further comments on the publication please contact:
RuralStatistics@gov.scot

Annex 1 – Questions included in consultation

Please note that for clarity the wording and question numbering has been changed slightly from that used in the online publication.

Q1. In terms of your interest in rural statistics, which of these groups would you say you belong to? Please tick one box.

- Central government
- Local government
- Parliament
- Other public body
- Academic institution
- Voluntary organisation
- Private organisation
- Private individual
- Other, please specify

Q2. Roughly how often do you use the Rural Scotland Key Facts publication? Please tick one box.

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Yearly
- When a new edition of the Rural Scotland Key Facts is published
- Other - please specify

Q3. What do you use the publication for? Please tick all that apply.

- Monitoring and formulating policy
- Monitoring and formulating targets
- Statistical analysis
- Combining with other statistics
- Preparing legislation
- Business/financial planning/allocating funds
- Teaching/education projects
- Research
- Media briefing
- Interest group
- General interest
- Other - please specify

Q4. In the "People and Communities" section, which of these topics are you interested in? Please tick all that apply.

- Demographics
- Households
- Neighbourhood and Community
- Physical Environment
- None of the above

Q5. In the "Service and Lifestyle" section, which of these topics are you interested in? Please tick all that apply.

- Access and Convenience of Services
- Travel Patterns
- Education
- Health
- Housing
- None of the above

Q6. In the "Economy and Enterprise" section, which of these topics are you interested in? Please tick all that apply.

- Industry
- Business
- Economic Activity
- Earnings
- Income
- None of the above

Q7. In each of the three drop-down boxes below we have listed the topics included in the publication. Please indicate the THREE topics of greatest interest to you by selecting one from each drop-down list.

- First Topic
- Second Topic
- Third Topic

Q8. We wish to ensure that Rural Scotland Key Facts contains topics which are of interest to users. Where topics are of little or no interest, we propose to remove these from the publication.

Below we have again listed all the topics currently included in the publication. Please indicate any which you would like us to drop from future updates.

- Demographics
- Households
- Neighbourhood and Community
- Physical Environment
- Access and Convenience of Services
- Travel Patterns
- Education
- Health
- Housing
- Industry
- Business
- Economic Activity
- Earnings
- Income
- None of the above topics should be dropped

Q9. If there are topic areas that you are interested in that are not included in Rural Scotland Key Facts, please provide details below.

Q10. Thinking about the statistics included in Rural Scotland Key Facts that you use, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the extent to which they:

Please select ONE answer only on each row.

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Meet your needs					
Are accurate					
Are timely					
Are clearly presented					
Are easy to find					

Q11. Are you content with the current frequency of the publication? Please tick one box.

- I am content with publication every two years
- I would prefer a different frequency of publication (please specify)

Q12. Do you use data on rural statistics from any other sources other than this publication? If yes, please enter the name of the source of rural statistics. If this is available online it would be helpful if you could provide the website address.

Q13. Please indicate how often you use this source of rural statistics.

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Annually
- Less often

Q14. In addition to being available online Rural Scotland Key Facts is published in a pocketbook format. We would like to know if this format is still useful with users or if an alternative format would be preferred.

Please indicate your preference below.

- Continue to publish pocketbook format
- Publish in an alternative format, e.g. A5 or A4 – (please describe this alternative format)
- Publish in both pocketbook format and an additional alternative format

Q15. If you have further comments regarding any other aspects of our work on Rural Scotland Key Facts please provide details below. You may also send comments by email to RuralStatistics@gov.scot