



Contextual Monitoring Report for
Urban and Rural Renaissance
2006



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Contextual Monitoring Report for Urban and Rural Renaissance

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

This report provides a framework of indicators and an interpretative discussion to assist in the monitoring of Urban and Rural Renaissance. It discusses definitions of Urban and Rural Renaissance and proceeds to describe the potential changes brought about by successful policy implementation, from which an indicators set was developed. Both Urban and Rural Renaissance are policy aims which cut across strategies, and require progress across a broad range of activities to succeed. Both are also polices at an early stage of their implementation. The report analyses the regional position and progress across a broad basket of indicators and draws conclusions about the overall progress of Urban and Rural Renaissance in the West Midlands Region.

The Regional Assembly, along with its partners, has identified the need to provide a contextual baseline assessment to help gauge the relative status of Urban and Rural Renaissance in the Region and to provide a framework against which to measure future progress and effectiveness of implementation. West Midlands Regional Observatory (WMRO) were engaged by the Assembly in December 2005 to prepare a baseline position including an interpretative discussion and to propose a framework for the Contextual Monitoring of the Region. In doing so this work builds upon the recent “West Midlands @2021” publication entitled “Planning for Regional Renaissance”.

1.2 A Review of the Evidence

Educational attainment amongst school leavers is lowest in urban areas, and when classified at the finest scale possible, shows a peak in attainment for rural/urban fringe areas, declining again in more remote rural areas. Educational attainment amongst school leavers is rising but there are significant local variations in improvement.

Nearly 20% of the workforce in the region hold no qualifications, with this generally, though not universally, higher in urban areas. Again, change over time

shows steady improvement in workforce qualification levels, but significant local variations in the trend.

Participation rates in structured learning for school leavers are below the national average in urban areas, and do not appear to be increasing. In contrast rates in rural areas are above the national average and show an upward trend.

Levels of self-employment rise consistently from the most urban to the most rural parts of the Region. Entrepreneurship as defined by new VAT registrations per 10,000 of the working population rises with increasing rurality, but overall levels of business stocks are stable in the most urban and the most rural areas. In the latter case, this suggests higher levels of business turnover or 'churn'.

Employment in value-added sectors is concentrated in major urban areas with the exception of Research and Development which shows a strong bias towards more rural locations.

Unemployment in the Region has fallen over time but it remains above the national average. Unemployment is still concentrated in some parts of the urban core of the Region, where the rate has also fallen most slowly. In more isolated rural areas there has been an increase in the number of residents claiming incapacity benefit or severe disablement allowance.

The pattern of net migration within the Region is well established, with the major urban areas continuing to lose population to the rest of the Region. Net migration out of the former metropolitan area has been increasing over the past 5 years but recent data suggests a slowdown. Significant numbers of urban residents continue to aspire to live in rural areas. There is net out-migration of younger people from the Region's rural areas to other regions in the UK. Long term forecasts suggest that the fastest population growth will be in the rural parts of the Region.

Data on changes in the stock of dwellings is inconclusive, but the house types which deliver higher densities of dwellings - terraced houses and flats – are most prevalent in the urban areas of the Region. These higher density types are largely dependent on older stock, with newer stock across the Region being detached houses and bungalows – with this being particularly the case in rural areas.

The most expensive parts of the Region in terms of housing affordability are rural, with South Shropshire, Stratford and Herefordshire the most expensive, whilst the most affordable are Wolverhampton and Stoke. There is evidence to suggest that the market for second homes in some parts of the Region is also related to lower levels of affordability. The share of property which is unfit has fallen most strongly in major urban areas, but the number of vacant dwellings as a proportion of the total stock remains higher in major urban areas than elsewhere.

Choice of residential location is driven by a number of key quality of life issues – community safety, environment, tranquillity, familiarity and belonging. For parents, a key group in terms of out-migration, community safety remains the key concern, but access to good schools is the second most important factor. Urban dwellers are particularly concerned with community safety, housing affordability and good public transport links.

Trunk road speeds in the Region have been falling steadily since 1995, particularly for the morning and evening peak. Causal factors are likely to be both increased traffic volumes and policy initiatives to reduce traffic speeds through enforcement.

Residents of major urban areas in the Region have the longest journey times in travelling to work, despite having some of the shortest distances to travel. Rural residents tend to travel further to work. There also appears to be a relationship between affluence and greater travel to work distances, in both rural and urban areas. Rural dwellers are more likely to depend on cars for their journey to work.

Urban residents are more likely than rural residents to feel unsafe in their own homes or neighbourhoods. Residents of major urban areas are most likely to have been victims of crime, and the likelihood of being a victim declines with increasing rurality. Crime rates in the Region have now fallen below the national average, and rates of burglary have fallen fastest in major urban areas.

Dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood of residence increases from the most rural to the most urban areas, whilst other indicators of neighbourhood harmony reveal the strongest sense of community amongst rural residents. Levels of voluntary activity increase with rurality.

Whilst indicators of health such as life expectancy and mortality are better in rural than urban areas, life expectancy is increasing and mortality decreasing in both urban and rural areas.

Service accessibility is lower in rural than urban areas, though evidence about whether rural accessibility is improving or not is contradictory.

The condition of green space in urban areas shows some evidence of improvement. Not surprisingly, the amount of green space increases with rurality, though there are significant local variations. More SSSIs in urban areas are in a favourable or recovering condition than their rural counterparts. Levels of fly-tipping also appear to be higher in urban areas, though here again, there are distinct local variations. Urban rivers are in a poorer condition than those in rural areas.

1.3 Cross-Cutting Summary

Many of the long run problems such as out-migration, low educational attainment, higher levels of deprivation and lower quality of life, persist in our urban areas. These are precisely the issues on which we would hope to see positive developments if we were to conclude that Urban Renaissance was taking hold. On many measures there appears to be little evidence of change yet, but this is what we might expect given the long run nature of the impacts of policy expected, and the early phase of policy implementation that we are currently in. There are however some suggestions of positive change – a possible tipping point on net out-migration, clear signs of improvements on educational attainment, and positive news on one of the most significant categories of crime, burglary. Urban renaissance has not yet hit its stride, and many more indicators need to point clearly towards it before we can be sure that we are moving in the right direction – but there are some clear green shoots of recovery.

The evidence pertaining to the regional position on rural renaissance is mixed as might be expected early on in the policy cycle. Moreover the picture varies between accessible and remoter rural areas, where the stories are often very different, and is further complicated because there are many areas – for example quality of life – where progress in rural areas is unequivocally desirable, but where improvement may further fuel the pressures brought through migration.

Indicators suggest trends counter to rural renaissance include the continued outward migration, car dependence, difficulties with housing affordability, and aspirations for urban living amongst the Region's urban residents. On skills the messages are more supportive of rural renaissance, although this appears to be a continued problem in remoter rural areas, and other labour market indicators are ambiguous, perhaps even contradictory. The most positive markers for rural areas concern quality of life and environment, though even these may prove to be a mixed blessing. Overall, therefore, there is only modest evidence of rural renaissance apparent, and the majority of the data indicates the persistence of the problems which the policy was established to address.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

This report is intended to provide both a framework of indicators and an interpretative discussion of this existing evidence base to assist the monitoring and assessment of Urban and Rural Renaissance policy objectives. It is written in response to a project brief provided by the West Midlands Regional Assembly which required the development of a rationale against which to judge progress for the Urban and Rural Renaissance policies, and the development of a set of indicators to measure progress against this rationale. The indicator sets chosen were intended to cut across the subject areas of Regional Strategies, and to provide a contextual background for monitoring progress across a whole range of issues. On their own none of these indicators provide a clear indication of the progress of the urban and rural renaissance policies, but taken together they should provide a composite understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Region's position. It is worth highlighting early on in this report that the main purpose of the RSS is to provide a long term land use and transport planning framework for the region. As the RSS was approved in 2004 this report can only identify any short-term changes since the implementation of Urban and Rural renaissance policy. It is recognised that many changes could be long-term, emphasising the importance of a monitoring cycle to try to capture these, and supporting the projection of the RSS forward to 2021.

The West Midlands Spatial Strategy provides definitions of both Urban and Rural Renaissance which are being increasingly adopted across the Region and its various strategies. **Urban Renaissance** is described as development of 'the MUAs in such a way that they can increasingly meet their own economic and social needs in order to counter the unsustainable outward movement of people and jobs facilitated by previous strategies'. **Rural Renaissance** is similarly described as 'addressing more effectively the major changes which are challenging the traditional roles of rural areas and the countryside'. Definitions go further in identifying that Urban and Rural Renaissance are interdependent and highlight that urban problems of depopulation, social polarisation and environmental degradation are mirrored by pressures on rural areas to accommodate development to meet the needs of out-migrants from urban areas, harming rural distinctiveness and character.

The Regional Assembly, along with its partners, has identified the need to provide a contextual baseline assessment to help gauge the relative status of Urban and Rural Renaissance in the Region and to provide a framework against which to measure future progress and effectiveness of implementation. West Midlands Regional Observatory (WMRO) were engaged by the Assembly in December 2005 to prepare a baseline position including an interpretative discussion and to propose a framework for the Contextual Monitoring of the Region. In doing so this work builds upon the recent “West Midlands @2021” publication entitled “Planning for Regional Renaissance”.

From this starting point, the contextual monitoring approach is to try first to define, and then to quantify, the changes that would signify change in terms of urban and rural renaissance, either positively or negatively. As a first step therefore, we need to posit those changes that would indicate that urban and rural renaissance are occurring, and then define and quantify these changes in such a way that we can measure change. The indicators used will not just duplicate RSS monitoring work – they need to go far beyond this, addressing the wider issues which will indicate positive change both in urban areas and rural areas, and which will be delivered by regional and sub-regional policies working together across a whole range of themes. Indicators utilised in contextual monitoring will typically reflect issues which cannot be characterised as the output of any one policy intervention or strategy, but rather the cumulative effect of many interventions and strategies.

It is important to recognise that both because of the limitations upon the scale of this study, and because of the limitations upon the data which are actually available to measure these issues at the appropriate scale and over an appropriate timescale, any set of indicators will be a limited and partial response to our monitoring aspirations. One of the most significant areas in which this work adds value is not in being exhaustive in what we are able to measure, but rather in providing a clear and logical framework in which we understand the nature of urban and rural renaissance, and can clearly identify gaps in understanding and in intelligence to monitor progress.

The final chapter of our report attempts to synthesise the messages drawn from the data and associated analysis and interpretation in the preceding chapters, essentially to answer a number of fundamental questions, these being:

- € What assessment can we make of the current position and progress in relation to the Urban Renaissance and Rural Renaissance policy goals?
- € How much of our understanding remains uncertain, and what do we need to know to bridge this gap – in other words, what are the data and intelligence gaps we need to fill most urgently?
- € Which are the indicators which appear to be most revealing in understanding progress on these two policy issues?

In answering the first of these questions, which is the most significant of these three, we need to preface our discussion by recognising that both Urban and Rural Renaissance are explicitly policy aims which are expected to take many years to work through, and at present we are only in the early years of the time period in which the policies are expected to take effect. In one sense therefore, we are looking for the short term evidence of policies expected to bear fruit in the long term, and hence we cannot necessarily expect to see clear progress on every indicator – indeed at this stage we may see contradictory messages which will point us to an understanding of where more work or thought is needed, and where the outcomes of policy or activity are not necessarily aligned, or delivering, to the overall policy aims of Urban or Rural Renaissance.

We also need to recognise, however, that our understanding of change in the Region, both in its urban and rural areas, has a much longer historical context, and policies over many years have been attempting to address some of the elements that we now characterise as part of Urban or Rural Renaissance. There may therefore be progress over a longer period which has been contributing to our overall policy aims – and at the same time some activity in the past has exacerbated the issues that we are now as a Region trying to address with the Urban and Rural Renaissance policies.

Moreover, in asking these three questions in order to frame our discussion, we underline the extent to which the work we are doing here aligns with the wider task being undertaken by successive State of the Region reports, and therefore reiterate the potential for synergy and ultimate merging of the Contextual Monitoring and State of the Region workstreams. This work assesses the state of the region in terms of urban and rural renaissance, and uses this to inform our understanding of policy and policy progress. In doing so, it also explicitly identifies where the evidence that we have falls short of what we need for clear and comprehensive understanding, and thus delivers a regional agenda for the development of data and intelligence arising from identified gaps in the data.

The final question should result in us being able to identify the smaller group of indicators which appear to be most revealing of change in Urban and Rural Renaissance – in essence the small group of indicators which form our ‘executive dashboard’.

In consultation with the project steering group, a series of qualitative statements were developed to describe aspects of positive development in both urban and rural renaissance, from which the set of indicators which follows has been developed. These statements are reproduced below.

2.1.1 *Urban Renaissance:*

- € Reducing levels of out-migration from the MUAs, particularly of families and people who are more affluent and/or people who have higher levels of educational attainment;
- € Higher levels of educational attainment amongst young people, not merely because more children of affluent and well-educated parents stay in the MUAs, but also because attainment and attitudes towards the value of education and skills is also rising amongst children from households with a lower level of parental educational attainment. Levels should not merely rise, but close upon the national average;
- € Retention and attraction of university graduates to the MUAs, increased utilisation of graduates in graduate level jobs;
- € Higher levels of workforce educational attainment, greater than that accounted for by higher levels of educational attainment amongst young people, and supported by evidence of a more positive attitude to educational and skills attainment amongst the existing workforce. As a consequence workforce skills will begin to match the forecast demand for higher level skills emerging from the labour market;
- € Higher proportions of knowledge intensive industry and employment in the MUAs;
- € Higher business densities per capita and higher levels of business start ups in the MUAs;
- € Initial increased congestion, followed by step changes in public transport and cycle transport provision, quality and usage, and consequent reductions in private vehicle traffic;
- € Reductions in commuting times for urban residents;
- € Improved urban quality of life, both real and perceived, with particular attention to levels of crime and disorder, fear of crime and disorder, and key environmental concerns such as litter, graffiti, vandalism, traffic and noise;
- € Changing priorities in reasons for residential choice, indicating resolution of key 'push' issues, and rising prominence of 'pull' issues;
- € Rising rates of housing density, accompanied by a greater proportion of family housing (3 beds plus) amongst high density completions;
- € Rising levels of quality in the built environment of the MUAs, and an improving position in relation to natural environment in urban areas – for example urban wildlife, biodiversity, water quality (as an example,

increasing water quality and biodiversity across the urban canal network would indicate positive change).

- € Increases in the amount and quality of urban green space;
- € Reducing levels of deprivation across the MUAs, and particularly in the most deprived parts of the MUAs, characterised by changes against a basket of key indicators, including reduced levels of unemployment, increased rates of workforce activity, reductions in claims for incapacity and other benefits;
- € Reducing levels of health inequality across the MUAs, and overall increasing levels of health, signified by improving positions against national and regional benchmarks for key indicators such as morbidity and healthy life expectancy;
- € Stable and rising house prices in the most deprived neighbourhoods of the MUAs. Maintained housing affordability, but with no areas identified as being in market failure or incipient market failure;
- € Continued and ideally increasing levels of community and civic involvement, and confidence in communal activity. Potentially characterised by rising confidence in the ability to effect change, increasing levels of voluntary activity, levels of participation in local democracy.

2.1.2 *Rural Renaissance:*

- € Diverse and balanced communities, sustainable and self-sufficient;
- € Stabilisation of population sizes and structures in accessible and remote rural areas, characterised by:

- a. Reducing levels of net in-migration to accessible rural areas, particularly on the fringes of the MUAs and in the south-east of the Region, particularly of families and affluent or well-educated migrants;
- b. Reduced levels of net out-migration of people under 30 (allowing for migration out for higher education, but also ensuring higher rates of return or compensating in-migration of young graduates) from remote rural areas;
- c. Reductions of levels of in-migration to remoter rural areas from affluent, well-educated migrants, particularly from the South-East.

- € Rising levels of educational attainment amongst school leavers and amongst the general workforce, arising from increasing attainment and more positive attitudes to education and skills amongst the indigenous rural

population (i.e. rises must not be due merely to in-migration of better educated urban migrants);

- € Diversification of the economic base in rural areas, with increasing proportions of employment in higher value-added, knowledge intensive activity, whilst retaining the competitive advantage of rural areas in terms of self-employment and entrepreneurialism;
- € High levels of utilisation and exploitation of broadband and other communications technologies to reduce the impact of distance on accessibility to markets and competitiveness;
- € Greater viability of rural market towns and other centres, characterised by fewer voids and non-commercial uses in retail centres, increasing commercial property values and rental yields in market town centres, increased turnover and profitability for market town businesses, the continued presence of thriving independent retail outlets in rural centres;
- € Stabilisation of traffic levels and private vehicle mileages in rural areas, reflecting reduced dependence on commuting into urban areas for higher value added employment, and a greater choice of alternative transport opportunities;
- € Increasing accessibility to a range of services for rural residents, particularly to key services for those resident in remote rural areas;
- € Improved rural quality of life, both real and perceived, with particular attention to fear of crime and disorder, key environmental concerns such as noise and traffic, and access to service issues, particularly for young people;
- € Increasing proportions of affordable housing completions, particularly for younger single people and couples, and overall rising levels of affordability across rural housing markets;
- € Reducing levels of rural deprivation and inequality, particularly under-employment, low income employment, benefit claims relating to low income, increased rates of workforce activity;
- € Improving levels of health in rural areas, as measured by key indicators such as healthy life expectancy and morbidity;
- € Continued and ideally increasing levels of community and civic involvement, and confidence in communal activity. Potentially characterised by rising confidence in the ability to effect change, increasing levels of voluntary activity, production of parish plans, levels of participation in local democracy.

Having reached agreement on the definition, the next stage was consultation with the Steering Group regarding possible indicators to evidence the above criteria. A

list of possible indicators was discussed, and a selection of these was chosen for further work. A subset of these indicators is presented in the chapter which follows, dealing with Urban and Rural Renaissance. The Data Annex which is available separately provides a compendium of the all the indicators assembled for this work.

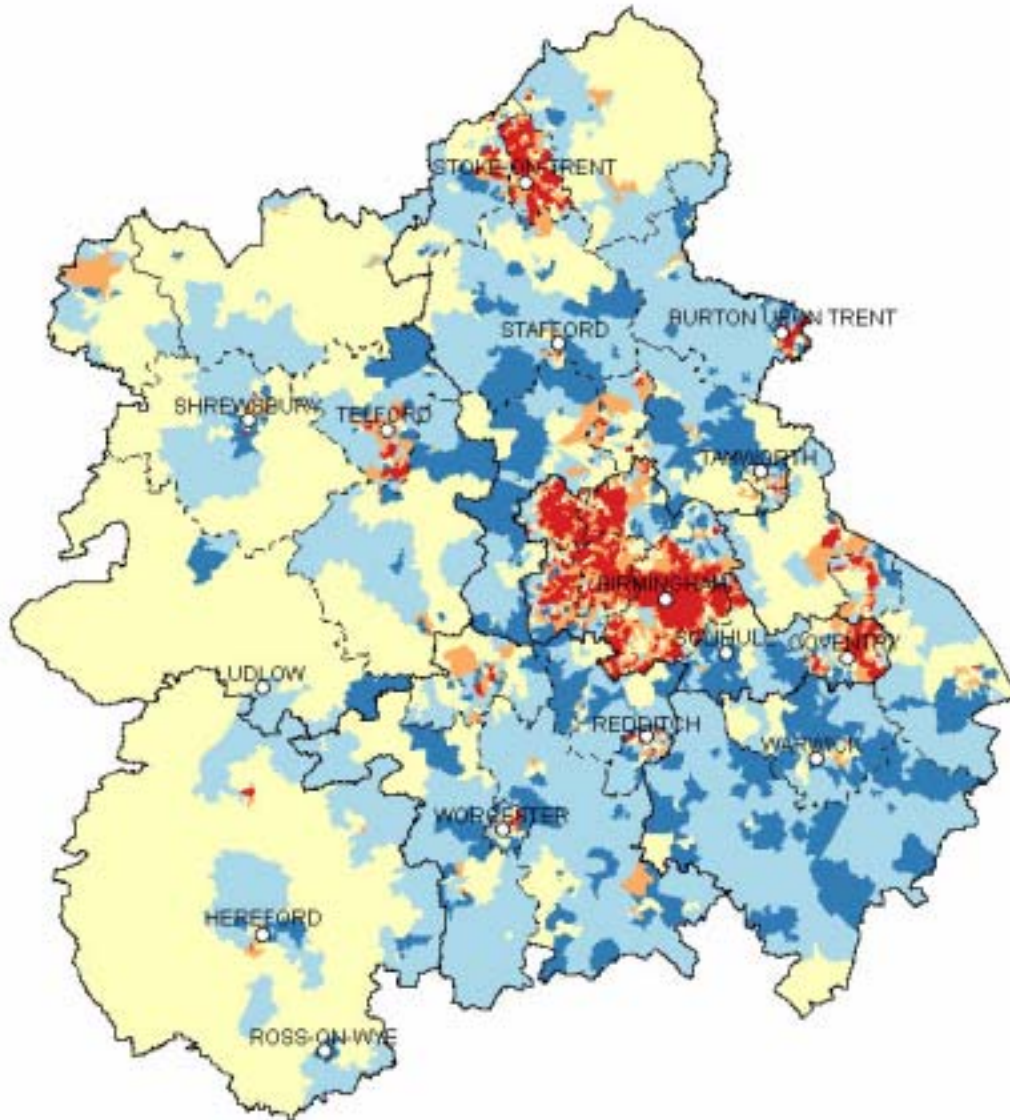
2.2 Deprivation¹

The Index of Multiple Deprivation has not been included in our set of indicators. This is partly because it is a composite index made up of a broad range of indicators, gathered together for a particular purpose, but also because it is not an indicator which is available in time series (the IMD2000 is very different in structure from IMD 2004) and it is likely that the next iteration of the index will differ markedly from the present one. It is therefore an unsuitable basis from which to determine change over time – essential to establish the direction of travel in terms of urban and rural renaissance.

Nevertheless, in introducing this report, it is useful to present a map of the distribution of the Index across the Region, shown below. This clearly illustrates the complexity of the distribution of deprivation and affluence across the West Midlands, with the most concentrated areas of deprivation found in the major urban centres and conurbations, though not exclusively so. Likewise most of the least deprived parts of the Region are found in rural areas, but there are also clear concentrations of lower deprivation within the major urban areas.

¹ For the Census 2001, the whole country was divided into small areas called super output areas (SOAs) and for each of these areas an Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2004) was calculated based on a range of indicators of prosperity and well-being. Every area was then ordered on the basis of its IMD 2004 score and the list was then divided into fifths or quintiles. The 20% with the highest IMD 2004 scores thus make up the most deprived quintile, the next 20% the second most deprived quintile and so on with the last 20% with the lowest IMD 2004 scores forming the least deprived quintile.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004, by Super Output Area



Indices of Multiple Deprivation

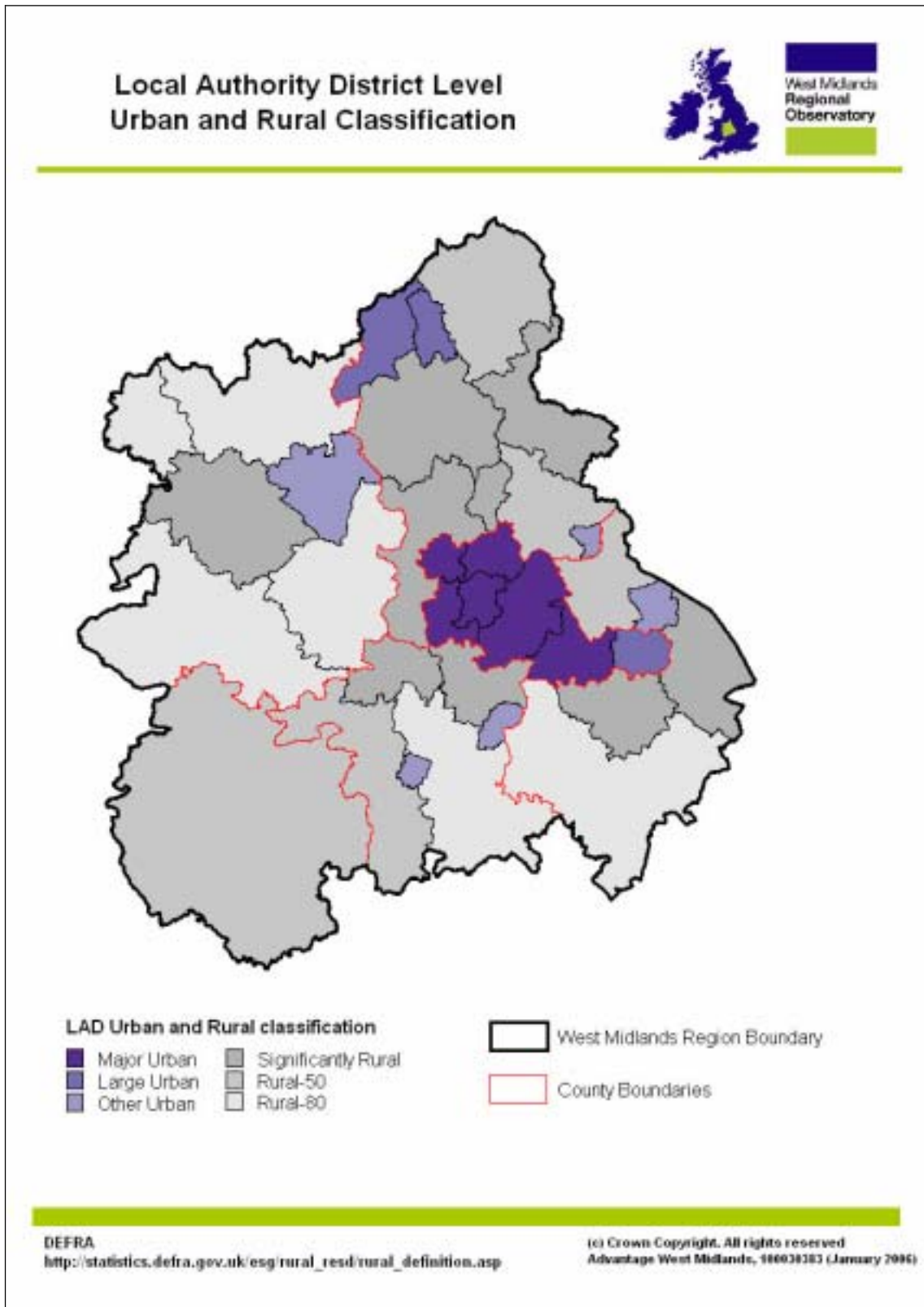
- Least deprived 20% SOA in England
- 60% - 80%
- 40% - 60%
- 20% - 40%
- Most deprived 20% of SOA in England

- West Midlands Region
- County Boundaries
- Local Authority Boundaries

Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister,
Indices of Deprivation 2004

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Advantage West Midlands, 100030383 (February 2006)

2.3 Local Authority Urban or Rural Classification



Throughout this report, wherever possible we use a six fold classification of urban and rural areas, based upon local authority areas. The Local Authority Urban or Rural Classification (1) was introduced in 2005 as a DEFRA initiative acknowledging the fact that many statistics are only available at LA level. It is a

graded system, and gives six Urban or Rural classifications. These are detailed below, and a map of their distribution across the Region is provided above and a listing is provided in Table 1 below.

- Major Urban: districts with either 100,000 people or 50 percent of their population in urban areas with a population of more than 750,000.
- Large Urban: districts with either 50,000 people or 50 percent of their population in one of 17 urban areas with a population between 250,000 and 750,000.
- Other Urban: districts with fewer than 37,000 people or less than 26 percent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns.
- Significant Rural: districts with more than 37,000 people or more than 26 percent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns.
- Rural-50: districts with at least 50 percent but less than 80 percent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns.
- Rural-80: districts with at least 80 percent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns.

Urban		Rural	
Major Urban	Birmingham	Significantly Rural	Bromsgrove
	Dudley		Cannock Chase
	Sandwell		East Staffordshire
	Solihull		Rugby
	Walsall		Shrewsbury and Atcham
	Wolverhampton		South Staffordshire
Large Urban	Coventry		Stafford
	Newcastle-under-Lyme		Warwick
	Stoke-on-Trent		Wyre Forest
Other Urban	Nuneaton and Bedworth		Rural-50
	Redditch	Lichfield	
	Tamworth	Malvern Hills	
	Telford and Wrekin	North Warwickshire	
	Worcester	Staffordshire Moorlands	
		Rural-80	Bridgnorth
			North Shropshire
			Oswestry
			South Shropshire
			Stratford-on-Avon
			Wychavon

Table 1: Local Authorities falling within each of the six classifications in the West Midlands Region

In addition the Output Area level rural and urban definition (2) is used in several instances; this classifies census output areas by aggregating underlying hectare grid measures of settlement size and sparsity. The classification groups output areas into 4 morphological types on the basis of their predominant settlement component determined by population density. It then classifies each morphology by sparsity, by scoring each output area for sparsity at 10km, 20km and 30km by producing a weighted total of 1ha squares within each output area; output areas are classified as sparse if they fall within the sparsest 5% of output areas at all three scales and are classified as less sparse if they do not fall within this threshold (3). Up to 8 classes of Output Areas can be distinguished as detailed in Table 2 and are mapped for the West Midlands Region below.

Morphology	Context
Urban (>10k population)	Less Sparse Sparse
Rural: Town and Fringe	Less Sparse Sparse
Rural: Village	Less Sparse Sparse
Rural: Hamlet and isolated dwellings	Less Sparse Sparse








Table 2: Output Area Urban or Rural classification categories

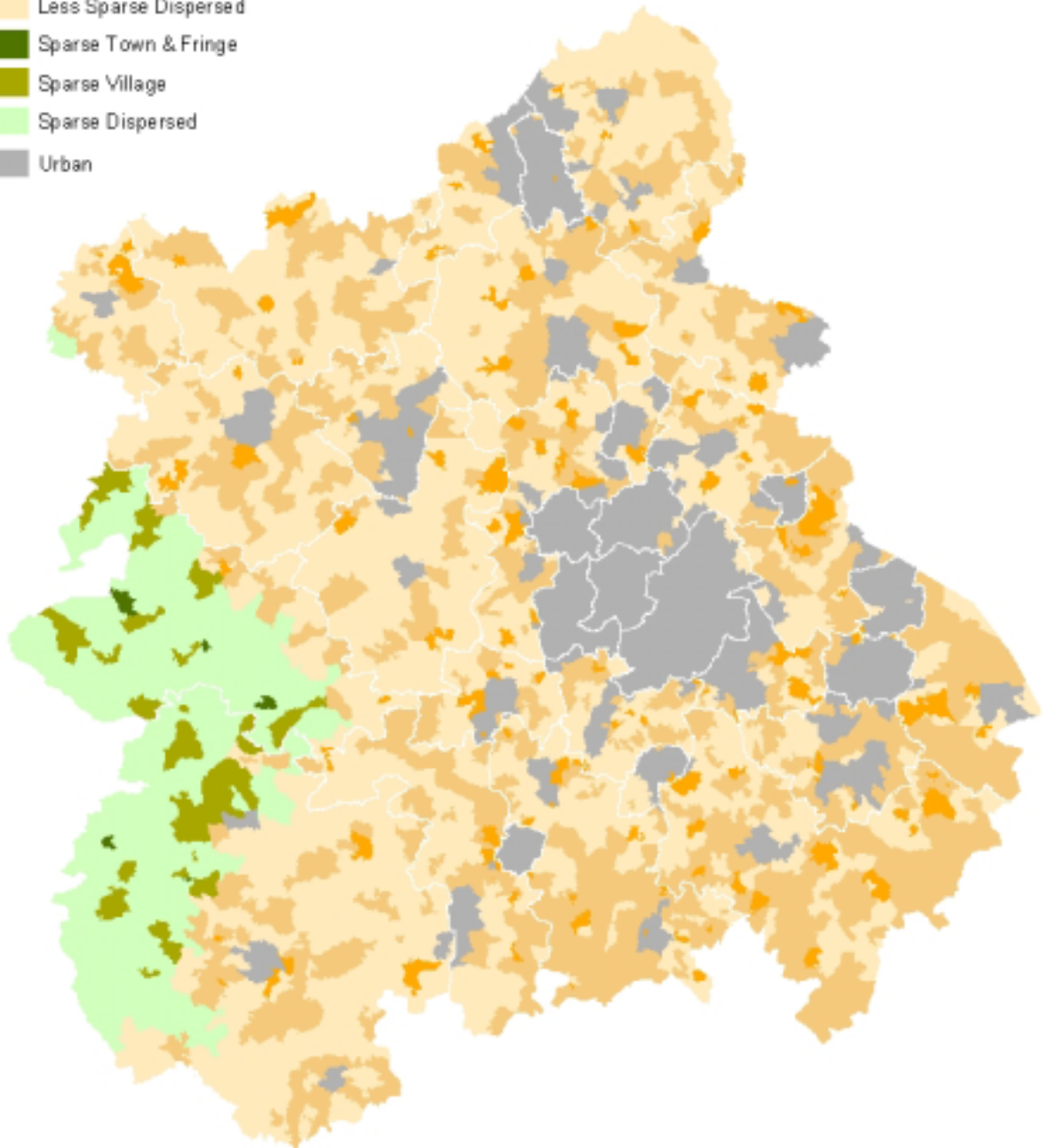
As a result of the higher aggregation level for Wards and Super Output Areas, the settlement classification must be condensed to only three measures; urban, town and fringe, and other (more dispersed settlements) while the sparse or non-sparse measure is retained. It is also possible to use the morphology without the context.

It should be noted that these definitions do not align with the RSS definition of Major Urban areas, which covers the Former West Midlands Metropolitan County and Stoke-on-Trent.

WEST MIDLANDS GOR

Census Output Areas Rural/Urban Definition 2004

-  Less Sparse Town & Fringe
-  Less Sparse Village
-  Less Sparse Dispersed
-  Sparse Town & Fringe
-  Sparse Village
-  Sparse Dispersed
-  Urban



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3 Urban and Rural Renaissance

3.1 A review of the evidence

Around 80% of the Region's population live in urban areas, although these account for only 20% of the land area of the region. The remaining 80% of land area is classified as rural and is home to 20% of the total Regional population. Historically major urban areas have lost population to the rural fringe areas and to the shire counties.

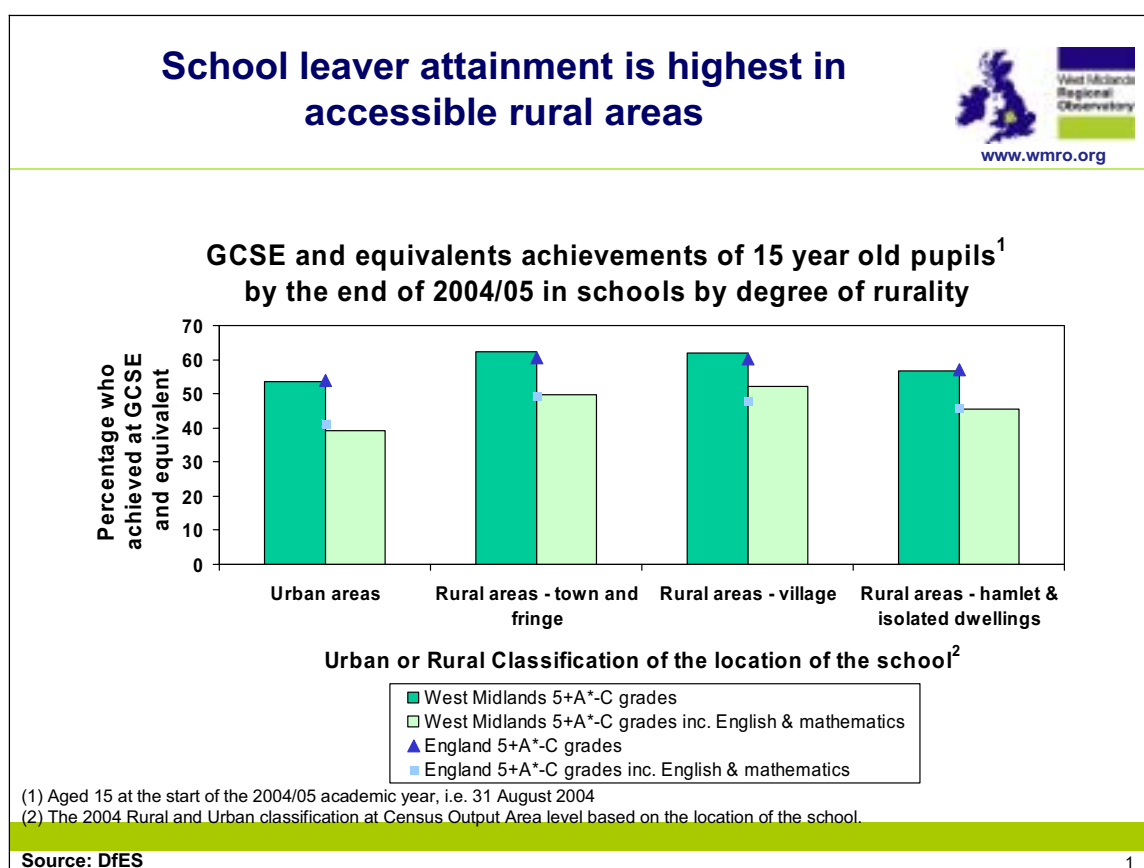
3.1.1 Education and Skills

Educational attainment at GCSE level in 2004-5 was lowest for schools in urban areas (53% achieved 5+ A* to C grade GCSEs in 2004-5), with a peak in the rural fringe areas (62% achieved 5+ A* to C grade GCSEs in 2004-5). The achievement of 5+ GCSE's at grade A*-C *including English and Maths* was 39% in urban schools which was below the National average of 41% for urban areas. This peak in achievement for schools located in fringe areas is in line with the historical trend of out-migration of more affluent and better educated individuals and their families, from the major urban areas in the Region to the more attractive rural fringes, and its persistence suggests that urban renaissance aims are not yet being fully achieved.

Attainment for schools located in areas classified as rural, was lowest for less accessible rural areas such as hamlets and isolated dwellings (57% achieved 5+ A* to C grade GCSEs in 2004-5). In terms of rural renaissance policy we would not expect to see such a big difference in achievement across the different types of rurality if its aims were successful, but rather would expect to see the most rural areas improving and, with decreasing levels of out-migration from urban areas, achieving similar levels as the fringe areas.

Over time if urban renaissance were happening we would expect to see the gap between urban and rural areas closing, and the peak in fringe areas removed. It should be noted however that the situation seen across the urban and rural areas in the Region is also a trend visible in the National data, which could mean stronger external factors are influencing this particular indicator.

DfES data has been available until recently largely at LEA level, however data is available at Local Authority level for 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 which suggests attainment has increased in all urban areas except 'other urban' where the level was the same in both years. The biggest increase (4%) was seen in large urban areas, which is a positive indication of urban renaissance starting to work. Over the same time period achievement levels went up in all rural areas in the Region, with the largest increases in significantly rural and rural-50 areas which is a positive indication for rural renaissance policy aims, since this can be a good indicator of the proportion of pupils who are likely to continue their studies post-16. The percentage of 15 year old pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE or GNVQ equivalent was substantially higher in rural areas than in urban areas, and we would expect this gap to close if urban and rural renaissance aims were being fully met. A consistent time series over a longer period of time is required to fully understand the impacts of these policies on educational attainment, since 2 years is a very short period over which to expect to see large changes resulting from school-year cohorts.



Drilling down into the data reveals that the pattern is not the same across all local authorities within each urban or rural classification; some experienced lower levels of achievements than in the previous year including Bromsgrove, Wyre Forest and

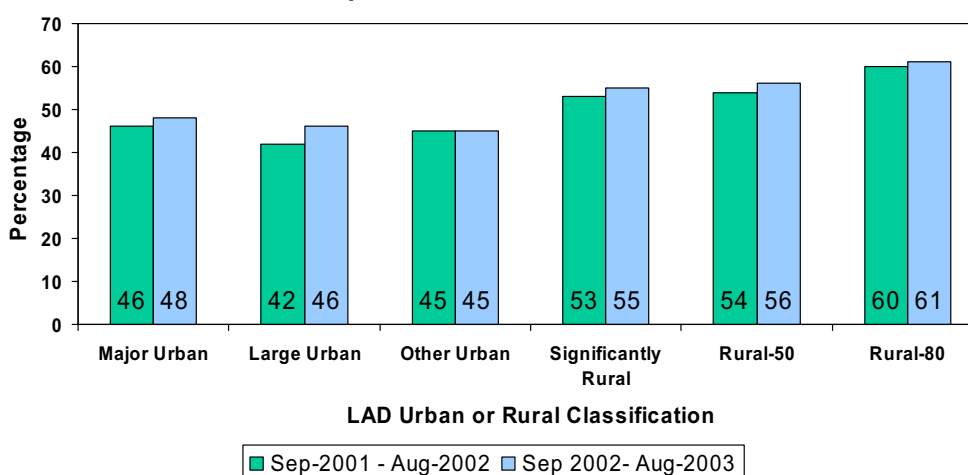
South Shropshire. Tamworth and Sandwell experienced very low levels compared to all other authorities, with 37.6% and 36.0% respectively. Over time, with successful urban and rural renaissance we would expect to see the poorer performing individual Local Authorities improving in line with the other authorities. Smaller area time-series data is required to analyse this trend in sufficient detail to support progress on urban and rural renaissance.

Local Authority level analysis masks the lower levels of attainment in more remote rural areas



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Percentage of 15 Year Old Pupils Achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE or GNVQ equivalent in Maintained Schools¹

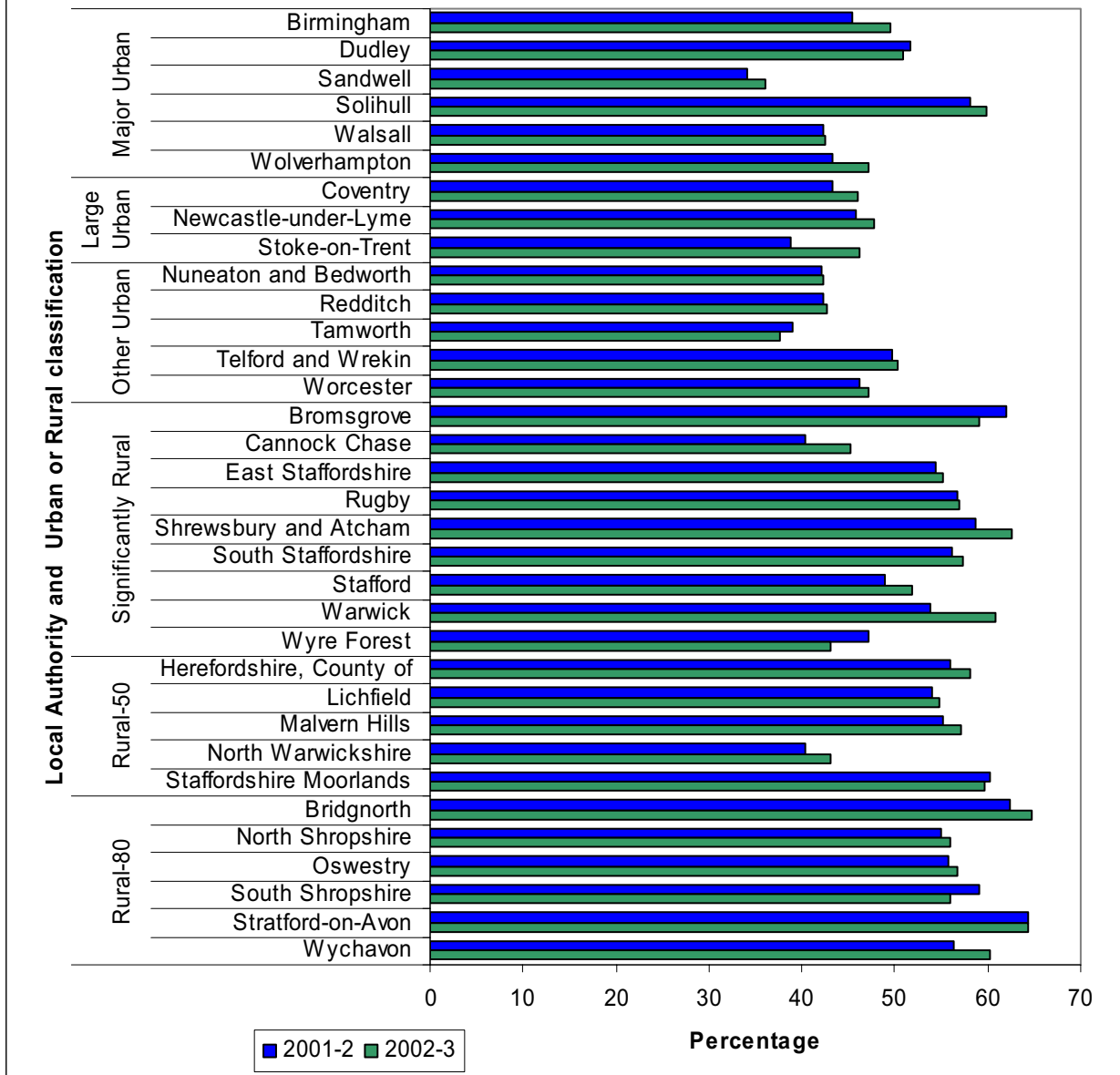


¹ Referenced by Location of Educational Institution

Source: DfES

2

Percentage of 15 Year Old Pupils Achieving 5+ A*-C GCSE or GNVQ equivalent in Maintained Schools (Referenced by Location of Educational Institution)



Source: DfES

Nearly 20% of the workforce in the Region holds no qualifications, with the greatest proportions residing in urban areas including Sandwell (27%), Stoke on Trent (25%) and Walsall (23%). There are however some outliers from the general trend, including Dudley (16%) and Solihull (12%), which suggests it is possible to reverse this trend in urban areas, but this is likely to be heavily influenced by deprivation, affluence and out-migration of better qualified individuals to more attractive rural fringe areas. In rural areas the proportion of the workforce holding no qualifications is generally much lower than in urban areas.

Sub-regionally time-series data is not available at LAD level to allow analysis by urban and rural classifications. However NUTS-3 level data reveals large variations

in the percentage of the workforce holding NVQ level 3 or level 4 qualifications, with lowest levels in Sandwell, Walsall, Stoke-on-Trent, Dudley and Wolverhampton, and generally low levels across the major urban areas in the Region.

	Percentage of Working Age population with Qualification level (Mar. 2003 – Feb. 2004)						
	NVQ 1	NVQ 2	NVQ 3	NVQ 4/5	Trade apprenticeships	Other qualifications	No qualifications
West Midlands GOR	15.7	15.1	14.6	21.1	6.1	8.6	18.7
Birmingham	15.3	13.9	14.9	20.7	4.0	9.2	22.0
Coventry	13.4	15.6	14.1	23.8	5.7	9.2	18.3
Dudley	16.5	16.5	15.8	18.3	8.4	8.5	16.0
Herefordshire, County of	17.0	16.0	13.2	23.9	8.0	7.2	14.6
Sandwell	16.3	15.8	12.4	14.2	5.3	9.4	26.7
Shropshire	12.5	17.5	13.2	26.1	7.7	9.1	14.0
Solihull	13.9	15.8	15.4	28.5	6.5	7.9	12.0
Staffordshire	16.2	15.6	14.9	21.6	7.1	8.8	15.8
Stoke on Trent	17.3	14.6	11.9	12.8	9.6	8.4	25.3
Telford and Wrekin	16.3	15.9	15.3	18.5	6.3	9.7	18.1
Walsall	15.7	14.1	12.6	16.8	6.3	11.3	23.2
Warwickshire	15.3	15.5	17.8	23.3	5.1	7.0	16.0
Wolverhampton	15.7	13.6	12.6	18.0	6.1	11.4	22.6
Worcestershire	17.3	14.2	15.4	24.5	5.6	6.2	16.8

Table 3: Qualification levels of the working age population (Mar. 2003- Feb. 2004)
Source: Labour Force Survey

Looking at the trend over time of the proportion of the workforce qualified to at least NVQ level 3, the Regional average has increased over time, and major urban areas on the whole appear to mirror this trend. This confirms our expectation of slow improvements over time if urban renaissance were actively happening, since we would expect better educated people to move back into the major urban areas. However, attainment in Stoke appears to have flattened out over time which raises concerns, and Solihull which was already high has continued to increase, providing evidence that affluence is still an important contributor, alongside urban or rural location, for this particular trend. In rural areas the proportion of the working age population holding NVQ level 3 qualifications has risen above the Regional average over time, but despite improving at faster rates (indicative of successful urban renaissance) has remained below this in most urban areas, indicating urban renaissance aims are a long way from being fully realised.

Recent data from the West Midlands Regional Lifestyle Survey indicates that residents of those areas outside of the urban core of the region (other urban areas), are better qualified than residents in major and large urban areas. The data appear to suggest that better qualified people are more likely to choose to live in the rural parts of the Region, which will not help in achieving urban or rural renaissance.

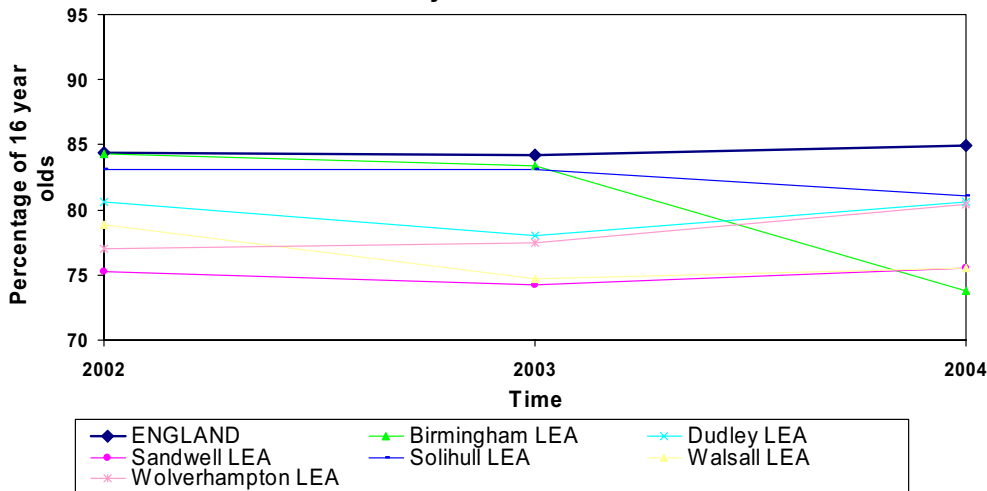
If urban and rural renaissance were succeeding we would expect to see the percentage of people with no qualifications decreasing and generally better levels of qualifications amongst both school leavers and the working age population overall in all areas and not just those fringe areas where historically better educated individuals have moved out to from the urban core, seeking a better quality of life. This is not obvious from the data available. Reducing levels of out migration together with more investment in training the current workforce to at least basic qualification levels will assist in achieving this. Relying on new school leavers replacing retiring individuals is unlikely to be sufficient to boost qualification levels of the workforce on its own, particularly with the ageing profile of the population in the Region. We would expect to see the current gap in levels of qualifications between urban and rural areas closing if urban renaissance were happening, but due to the nature and timescale involved with obtaining qualifications, it seems likely that there will be a long time-lag between intervention and visible results in this area.

Participation rates in structured learning (including school sixth form, Further Education and work based learning such as apprenticeships) have not shown a consistent trend for major urban areas in the Region but have continued to remain below the national average. With successful urban renaissance this gap should be closing. Most recent trends have been positive and in support of urban renaissance, except in Birmingham and Solihull where the number of school leavers not in education, employment or training (referred to as NEET) has increased. This could be natural fluctuation rather than a reversal of the trend. Participation rates in predominantly rural areas in the Region have however increased over time in-line with the national trend. They have continued to exceed the national average, except for Herefordshire which has now risen to parity with this. The levelling off of structured learning rates between 2003 and 2004 and decreasing rates of NEETs appear positively to support rural renaissance. Time series data is important for monitoring this in the future, and availability at smaller area level would be preferable to enable classification to the Urban or Rural groups.

In major urban areas, participation in learning is below the national average



School leavers participation in structured learning; Major Urban Areas



Source: Connexions, Annual Activity Survey 2004

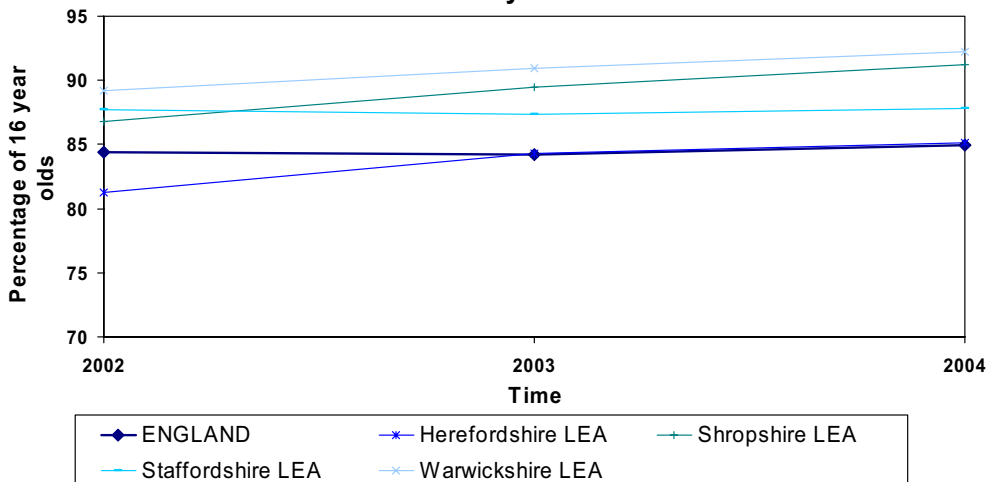
(The survey covers all young people who were in year 11 during the school year ending Aug. 2004).

3

In rural areas, participation in learning is above the national average and rising



School leavers participation in structured learning; Predominantly Rural Areas



Source: Connexions, Annual Activity Survey 2004

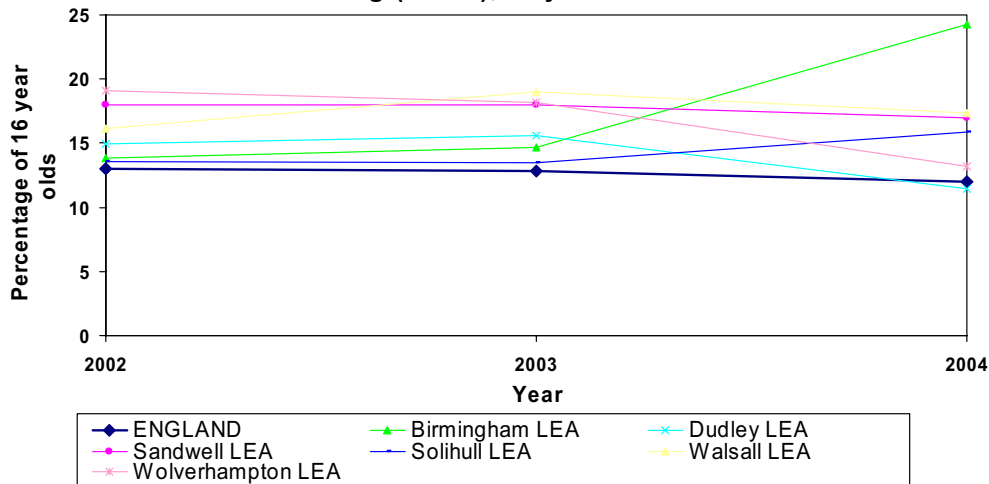
(The survey covers all young people who were in year 11 during the school year ending Aug. 2004).

4

Nearly a fifth of young people in major urban areas are not in education, employment or training



Number of school leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET); Major Urban Areas



Source: Connexions, Annual Activity Survey 2004

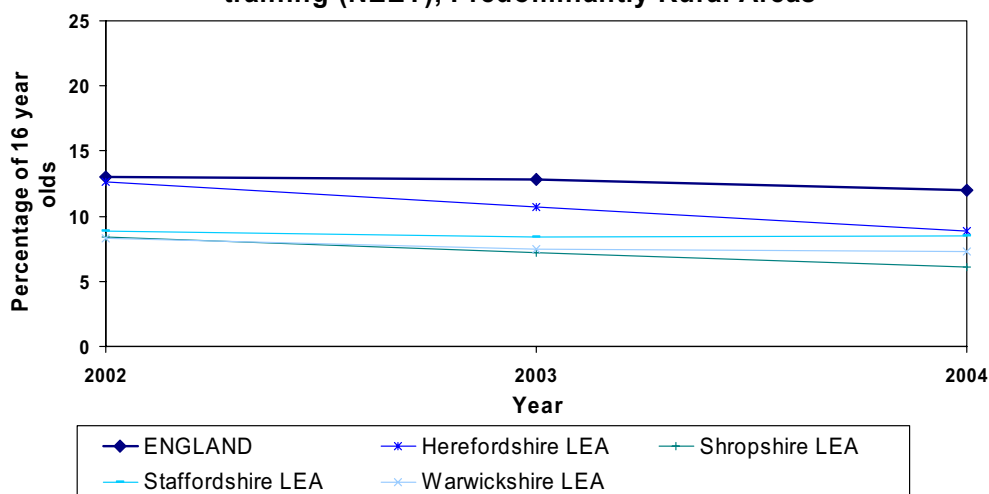
(The survey covers all young people who were in year 11 during the school year ending Aug. 2004).

5

In rural areas, fewer young people fall out of formal education, employment or training



Number of school leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET); Predominantly Rural Areas



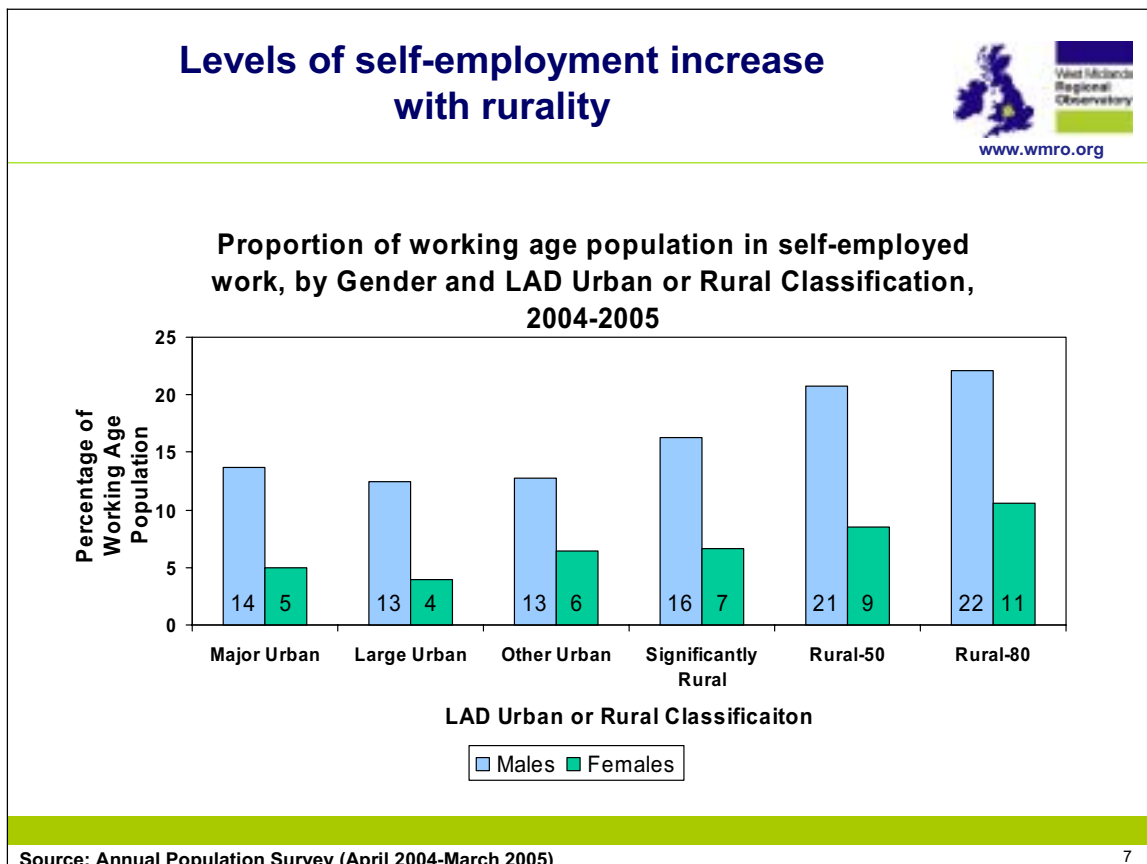
Source: Connexions, Annual Activity Survey 2004

(The survey covers all young people who were in year 11 during the school year ending Aug. 2004).

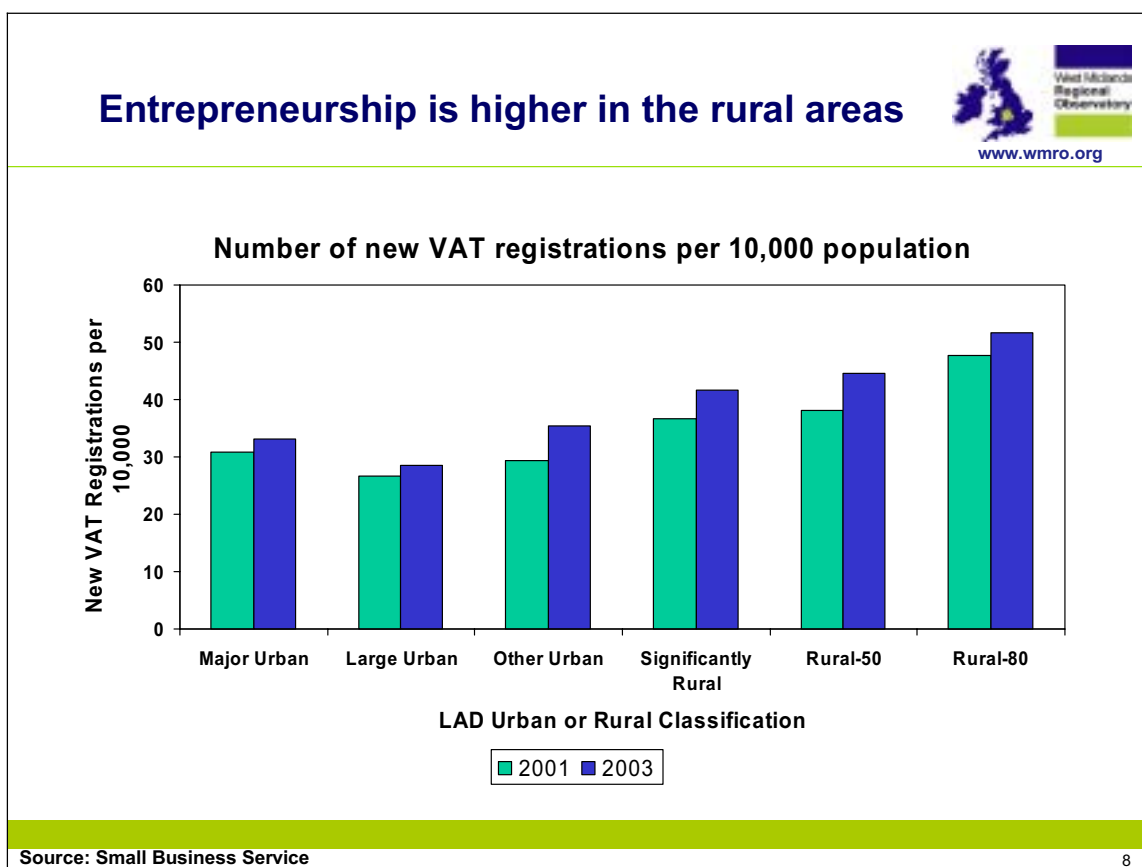
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3.1.2 Employment Structure and Dynamics

Levels of self employment are low in urban areas compared to rural areas. In urban areas levels are highest in ‘other urban’ areas (12.8% males, 6.4% females) and ‘major urban’ areas (13.7% males, 5.0% females) while the highest levels in both males and females are in the most remote rural areas (22.1% males, 10.6% females). This may relate to historical sectoral structure and may therefore be driven to a large extent by the culture of self employment in agriculture and related industries. Self employment can be an indicator of entrepreneurialism, although data on the number of businesses starting up is a better indicator of this. Both display the same overall pattern and, when combined with the migration patterns in the Region, provide some support for findings in a study from Keeble and Tyler (3) that migrants from urban areas enhance entrepreneurial activity, and contribute to higher rates of enterprising behaviour in rural areas relative to urban areas. Analysis at local authority area level reveals variation within each of the urban classifications, with the highest self employment rates in Walsall and Solihull, and the lowest rates in Sandwell and Coventry. Variation is also seen within each of the rural classifications, being highest in South Shropshire and the County of Herefordshire and lowest in Stafford, East Staffordshire and Shrewsbury & Atcham.



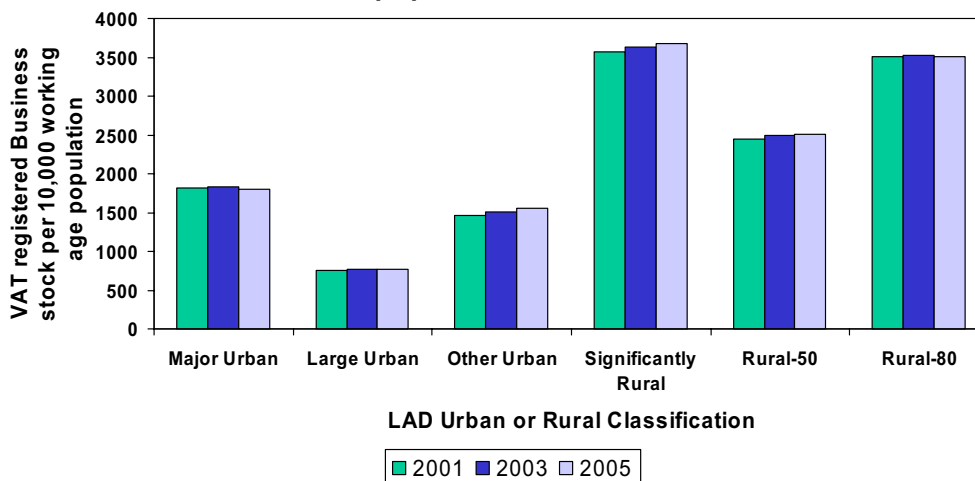
VAT registered business density has decreased slightly over time, with increases seen in the other urban areas, and also in the rural fringes and more accessible rural areas. This appears to be indicative of sub-urbanisation of businesses which is counter to the aims of urban renaissance, and may reflect the growing trend for out-of-town business parks. With successful urban renaissance we would expect to see business density growth declining in those rural areas most affected by urban out-migration, and growth increasing in the major urban areas. However with successful rural renaissance we would expect to see business density growth increasing in all areas, and particularly in the more isolated rural areas, which combined with urban renaissance slowing the growth in rural fringe areas would eventually lead to growth rates rising in-line with each other, both across rural areas and over an increasingly long period between urban and rural areas.



In remote rural areas, business stocks are not increasing



VAT Registered Business Stock per 10,000 working age population over time



Source: Small Business Service

9

Some Regional level data has become available through the work of the Regional Skills Partnership which provides evidence of low graduate retention rates and that a high proportion of graduates in the Regions workforce are being under-utilised. There remains a large gap in the evidence base sub-regionally, which means we are unable to understand whether there are any significant differences between urban and rural areas.

The top 10 sectors in terms of value added are shown in table 4 and the share of employment within each of these sectors is broken down by the urban and rural classifications. This shows that Research and Development increases in significance with rurality, whilst the other sectors are predominantly located in urban areas. A major reason for these differences could be that R&D companies are able to exercise choice regarding location, whilst location of the other industries is driven by service requirements. Other urban areas have a low share across the entire top 10 value added sectors, suggesting these areas are either not suitable or are not being chosen. When this is considered alongside population migration flows, it does not seem to indicate that a higher level of value added services is contributing to immigration. In fact when journey to work is taken into account it suggests that out-migration from urban areas and high employment in value added services may be contributing to longer commutes, since high value-added employment remains concentrated in more urban areas.

Top 10 Value Added Sectors	Health and social work	Renting of machinery and equipment	Sewage and refuse disposal, sanitation	Other business activities	Computer and related activities	Research and development	Real estate activities	Other service activities	Hotels and restaurants	Manufacture of other non-metallic mineral
Value Added as a percentage of turnover (2003)	64.5%	63.3%	60.8%	59.4%	59.2%	49.8%	49.4%	47.3%	46.4%	44.4%
Share of employment within sector (%) (2004)										
Major Urban	44.8%	44.4%	53.5%	51.0%	43.1%	10.4%	46.9%	32.9%	39.5%	15.8%
Large Urban	13.8%	9.5%	8.8%	10.6%	10.6%	5.0%	9.4%	11.5%	11.3%	48.2%
Other Urban	9.1%	9.7%	11.8%	11.2%	11.8%	1.4%	8.5%	10.3%	7.8%	6.8%
Significantly Rural	18.7%	22.4%	12.1%	16.2%	20.8%	8.1%	16.9%	25.4%	21.4%	17.6%
Rural-50	8.2%	7.5%	8.1%	5.4%	7.1%	41.1%	8.0%	11.3%	10.7%	7.9%
Rural-80	5.4%	6.5%	5.7%	5.6%	6.6%	34.1%	10.2%	8.5%	9.2%	3.7%

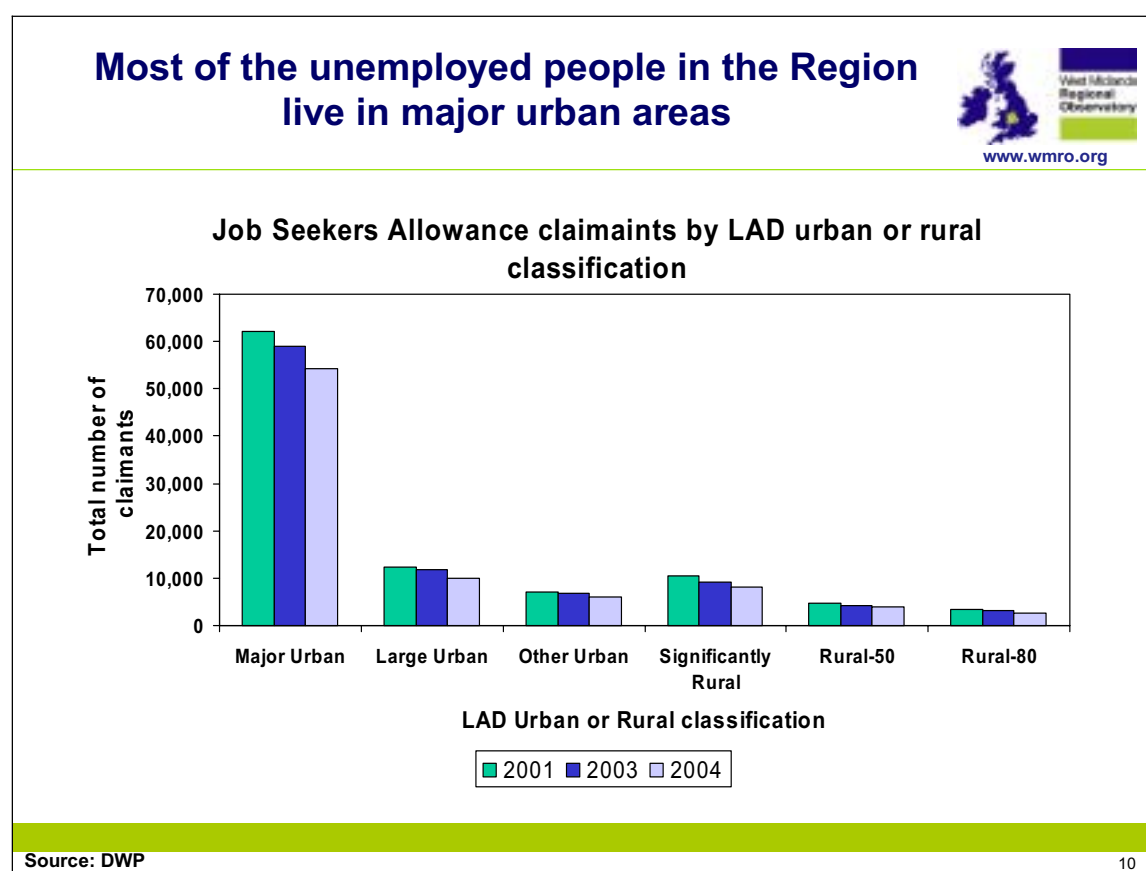
Table 4: Employment in top 10 value-added sectors
Source: ABI2 2003 and 2004

The problems with qualification levels across the Region's workforce as discussed earlier are reflected in the proportion of employment in 'knowledge industries', resulting in a weak knowledge economy in the Region. An understanding of the most important sectors in the urban and rural economies when coupled with those sectors classified as 'knowledge industries' will help us to understand the extent to which this may be important in the different areas, and will assist in understanding any impacts of urban and rural renaissance.

Unemployment in the Region has fallen over time, but it remains above the national average and there is no evidence that the gap is closing. The rate has decreased most notably in 25-49 year olds and those aged 50 and over, but has not decreased as much in 16-24 year olds. Although unemployment is heading in the right direction, the rate of decrease in 16-24 year olds is still an area for concern in helping urban and rural renaissance policies achieve their aims. For sub-regional data we are unable to use the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition of unemployment, but instead have to rely on Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimant data which may be under-estimating the true levels. This reveals that unemployment has gone down in all urban and rural areas, although when we look at the map of claimant rate this reveals a hotspot in the major urban core of the region, which reflects the finding that these areas have the lowest proportion of economically active people of working age (75%) compared to large urban areas (82%) and other urban areas (80%). The map also reveals that unemployment in rural areas is concentrated around the main towns. If urban and rural renaissance were happening we would not expect to see such pronounced hotspots, and in the future would hope to see an increase in the proportion of people of working age that are economically active in major urban areas coupled with a levelling off between

all urban areas. The downward trend in unemployment and incapacity benefit does however reveal positive signs that urban renaissance may be beginning to have effect. In more isolated rural areas the data show an increase in the number of residents claiming incapacity benefit or severe disablement allowance, which is not a positive indicator of successful rural renaissance, since it is recognised as an indication of long-term disengagement from the workforce. Future monitoring of this will be important.

Income support claimant rates can be indicative of deprivation and poorer quality of life, and while rates across the urban and rural areas were increasing between 2000 and 2003, changes in the way payments were paid in October 2003 and October 2004 make any recent trend hard to analyse. Due to the limitations of the current data, future trends will be important for supporting the unemployment and JSA conclusions in relation to urban and rural renaissance.

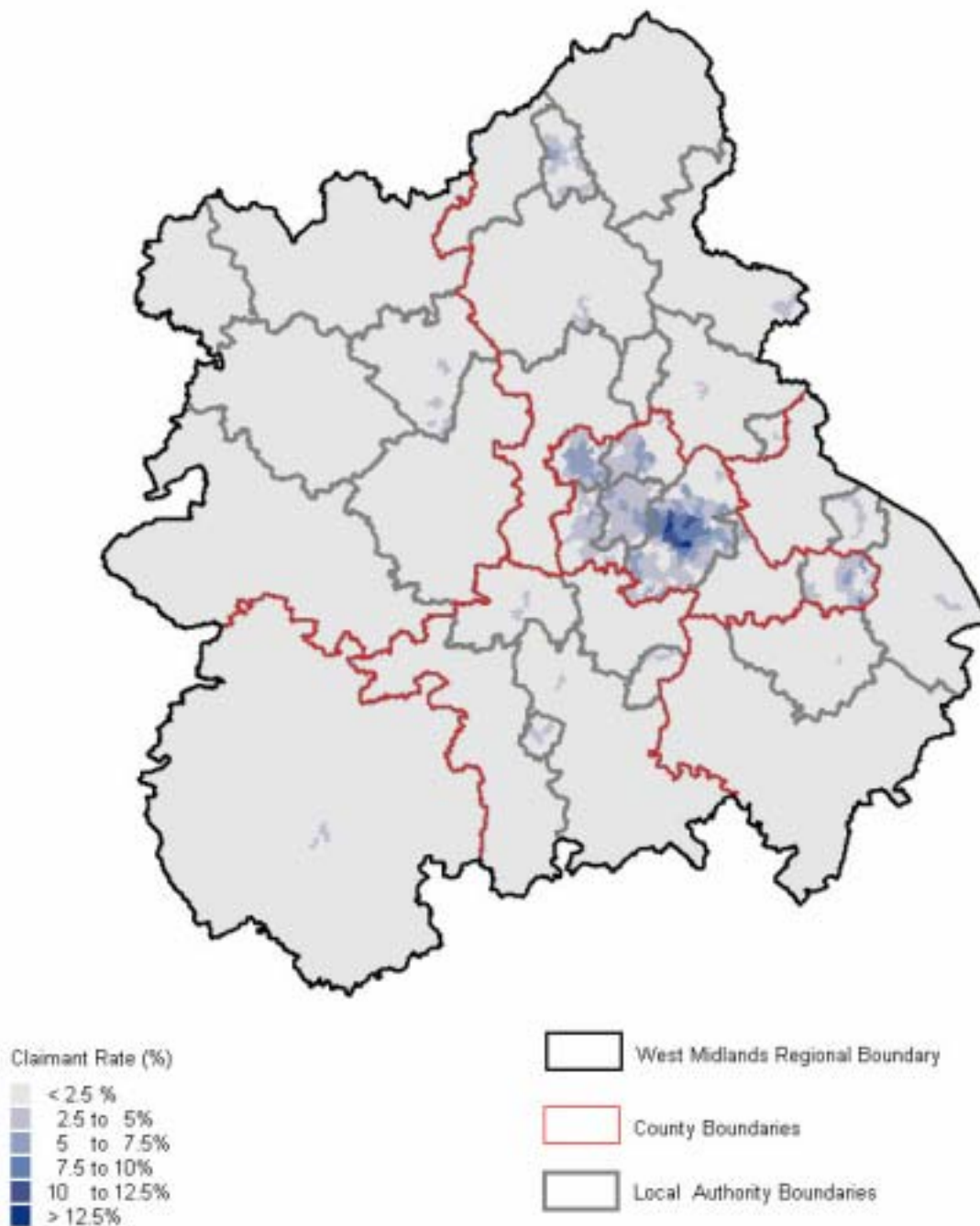


	% decrease in number of Jobseekers Allowance claimants between 2001 and 2004
Major Urban	12.8
Large Urban	19.3
Other Urban	16.7
Significantly Rural	20.9
Rural-50	19.2
Rural-80	21.4

Table 5: Percentage decrease in the number of Jobseekers Allowance claimants (2001-2004)

Source: DWP

Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate (2004) at Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) level

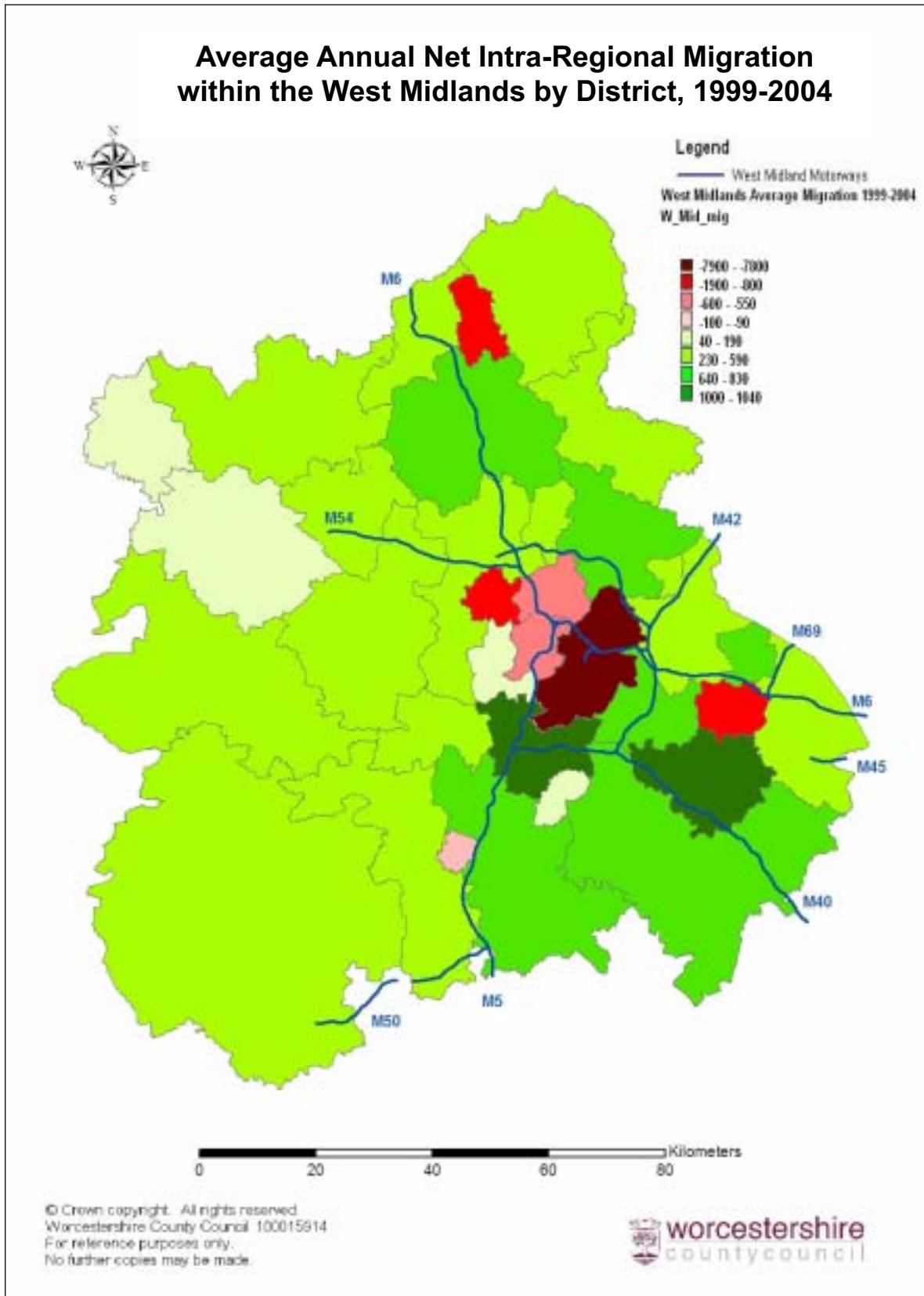


Source: Neighbourhood Statistics
JSA claimant figures, 2004

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Advantage West Midlands, 100030383 (March 2006)

3.1.3 Demography and Migration

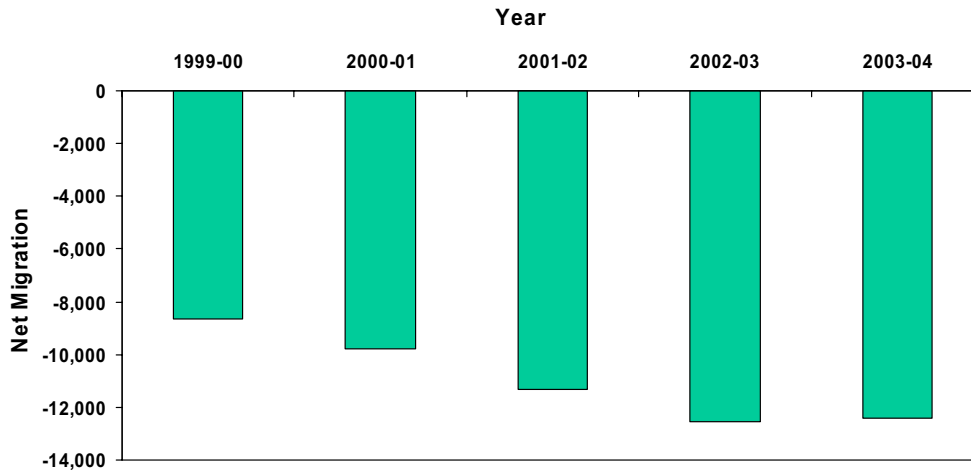
The pattern of net migration within the Region is historically well established, with the urban areas and particularly the conurbation (or major urban areas) continuing to lose residents to the rest of the region.



Source: NHSCR data 1999 to 2004

Net out-migration from urban areas may be slowing

Migration into the West Midlands Conurbation from the rest of the West Midlands, 1999-2004



Source: NHSCR

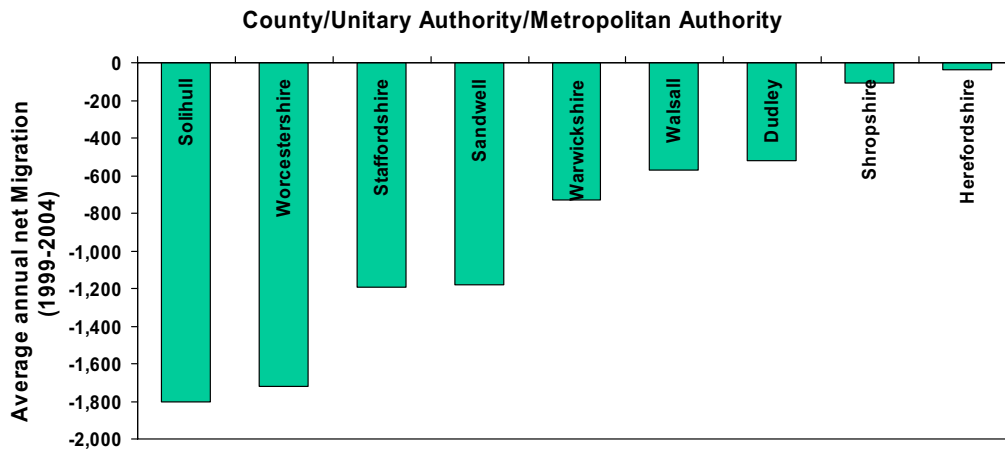
11

Net migration out of the Former Metropolitan area has been increasing over the last 5 years, although the most recent data suggests this could be slowing down. The conurbation loses population to the rest of the West Midlands across all age groups, but the bulk of the net losses seem due to migrating families (5) which links well with the hypothesised impact of out-migration on GCSE results in rural fringe schools.

Birmingham experienced the greatest net loss between 2000 and 2004, with the largest net losses to Worcestershire and Solihull, both of which gained around a net 1,800 from Birmingham per year (5).

Migration out of Birmingham is predominantly to Solihull and Worcestershire

Average annual net migration between Birmingham and other parts of the West Midlands, 1999-2004

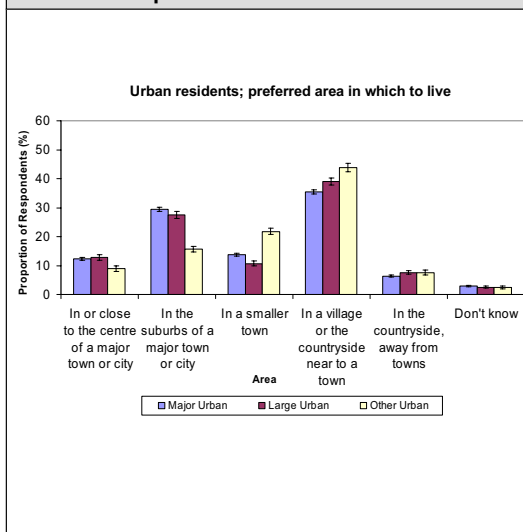


Source: NHSCR

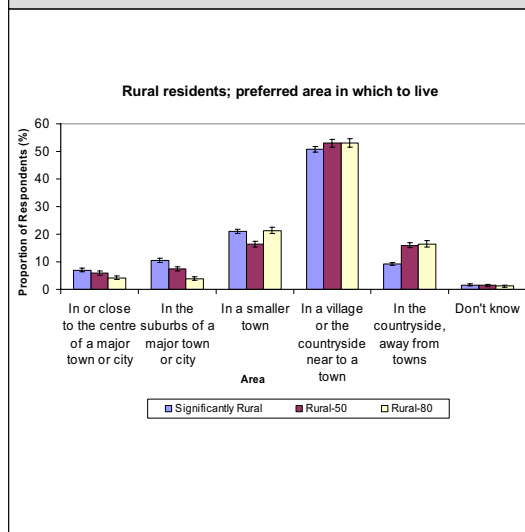
12

More people aspire to live in accessible rural areas than anywhere else

A high proportion of residents of urban areas aspire to live in rural areas



While the majority of residents of rural areas seem to be satisfied with their current situation

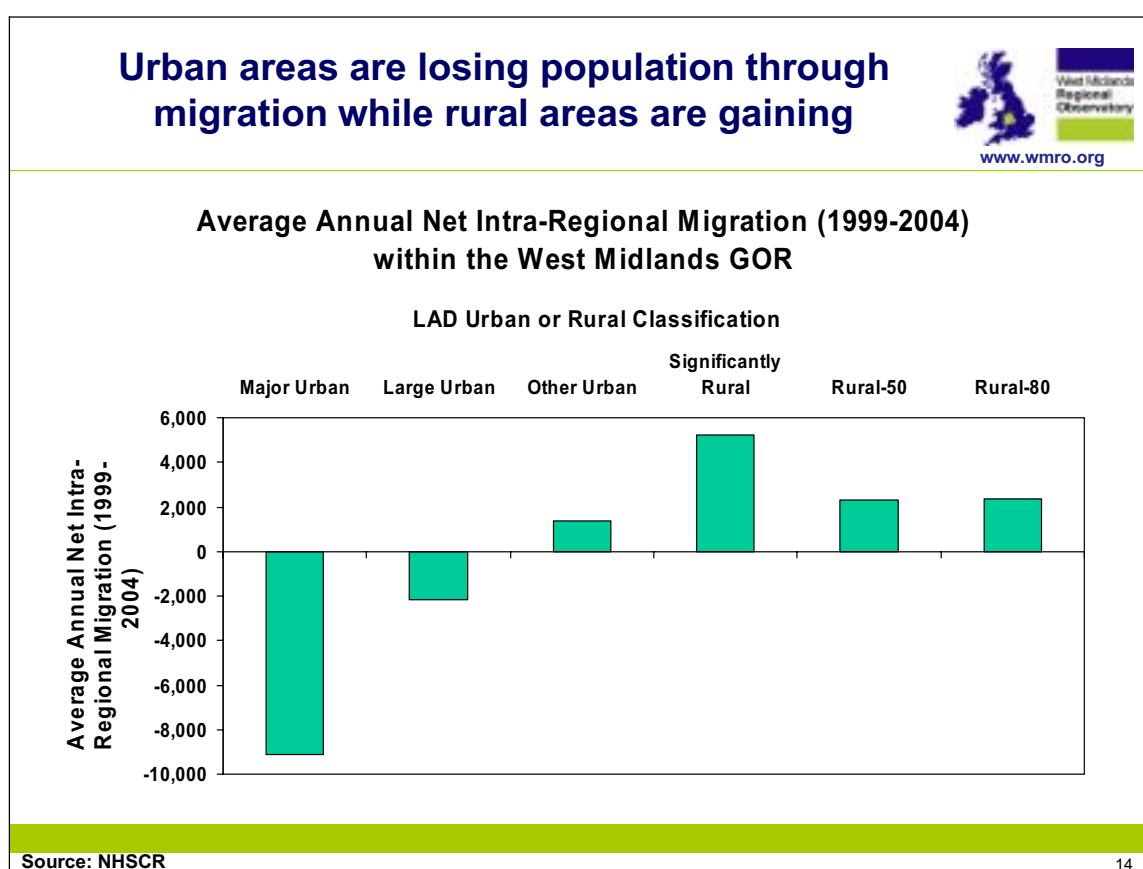


Source: Regional Lifestyle Survey 2005 © WMRO and WMPHO (Regional weighting frame)

13

The rural population has grown at a faster rate than the population in the Region as a whole, largely as a result of net in-migration both from the urban areas and from places outside the Region. Understanding attitudes which lie behind people's choices of where to live is critical to many aspects of regional policy, and work from the Regional Lifestyle Survey indicates that 35% of people currently residing in the major urban parts of the region, actually aspire to live in a village or in the countryside close to a town – this equates to 600,000 people, and reveals significant motivation levels for continued out-migration from urban to rural areas.

Looking purely at urban to rural flows within the Region indicates that for all age groups the net movement is from urban to rural, which mirrors the overall picture.

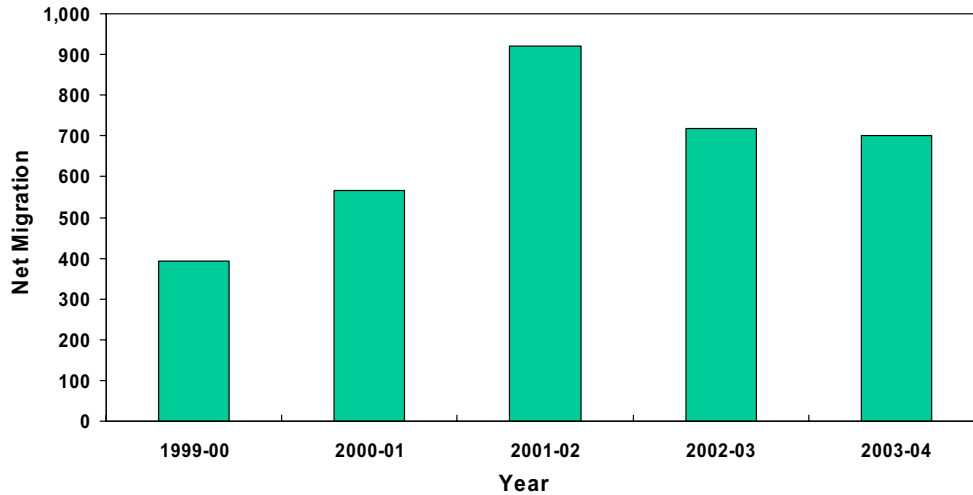


Only the Eastern and South East and London Regions consistently contribute a net-gain in residents through inter-regional migration, and when this is mapped a trend to move into the more rural parts of the Region is seen. Migration from the South East and London in particular will be impacting on housing affordability issues in rural areas, and its persistence will not help in meeting rural renaissance aims.

Inward migration from the East of England is slowing



Migration into the West Midlands from the East of England, 1999-2004



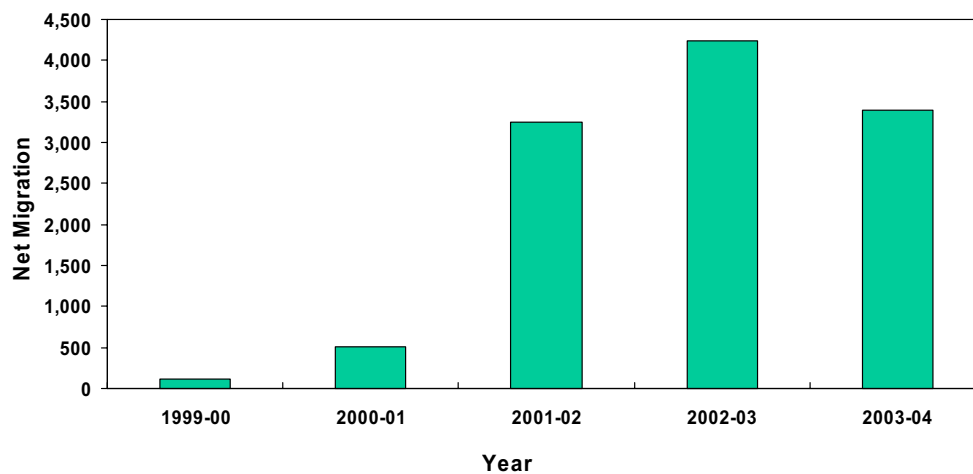
Source: NHSCR

15

Inward migration from London and the South East may be slowing down



Migration into the West Midlands from the South East & London, 1999-2004



Source: NHSCR

16







Average Annual Net Inter-Regional Migration from London/South East into the West Midlands by District, 1999-2004

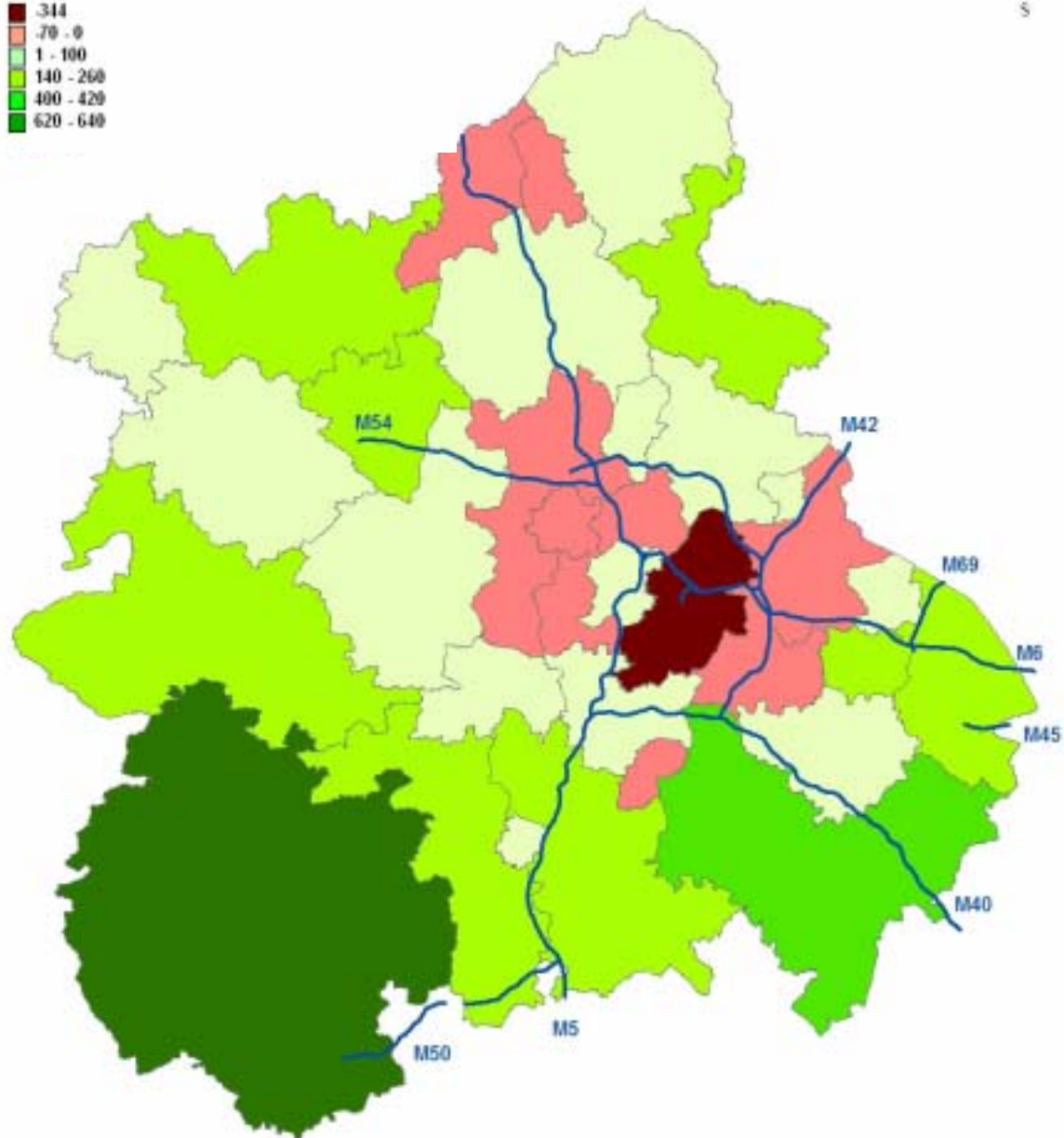
Legend

 West Midland Motorways

West Midlands Districts Average Migration 1999-2004

SE_Land

-  > 344
-  70 - 0
-  1 - 100
-  140 - 260
-  400 - 420
-  620 - 640

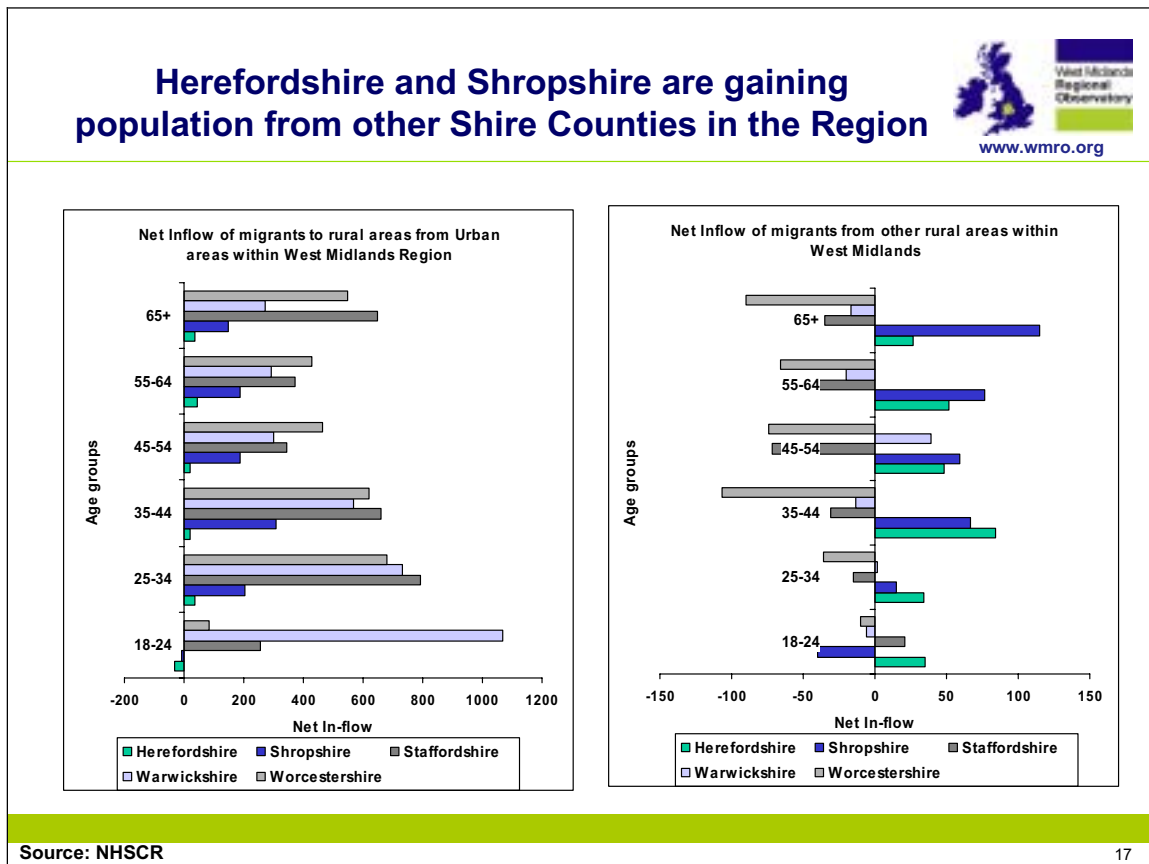


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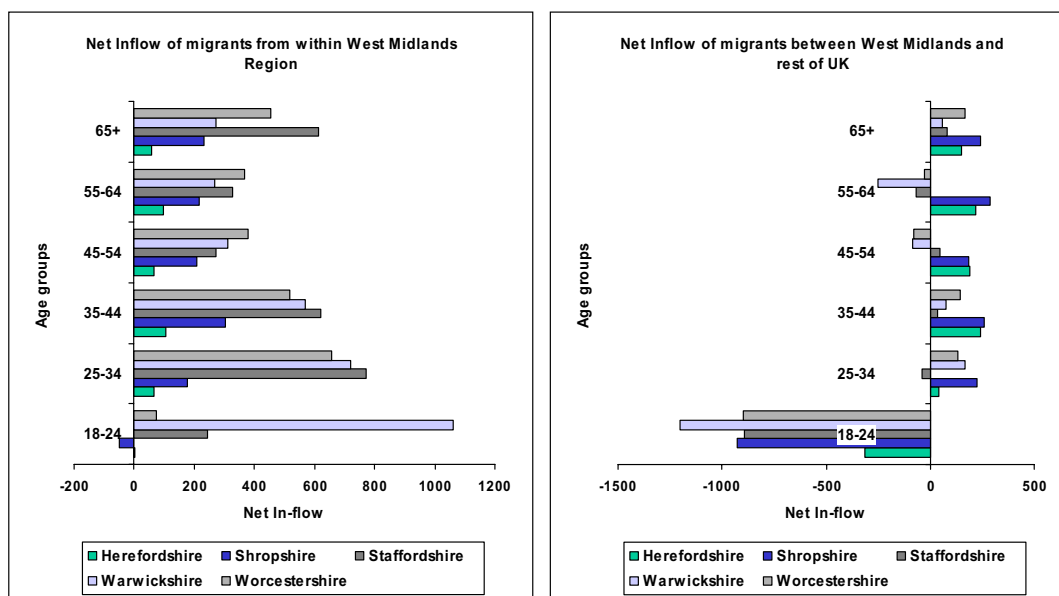


Source: NHSCR data 1999 to 2004

Analysis of NHSCR migration data undertaken in the State of the Region Update 2005 (below) revealed that only Warwickshire receives substantial net in-migration from 18-24 year olds, whilst there is net out-migration of this age-group from Shropshire to the rest of the Region, and this age group also shows strong net out-migration to other parts of the UK. Work from the Regional Lifestyle Survey reveals that individuals in this age band are most likely to aspire to live in urban areas, which emphasizes the drivers behind movements within this age-band may be as much to do with choice as with affordability and other policy-driven issues.



Pattern of net-migration indicates losses of rural young people to other regions



Source: NHSCR

18

The population pyramid for the region is indicative of an ageing population and low birth rates, which has many implications discussed in recent studies (6), (7).

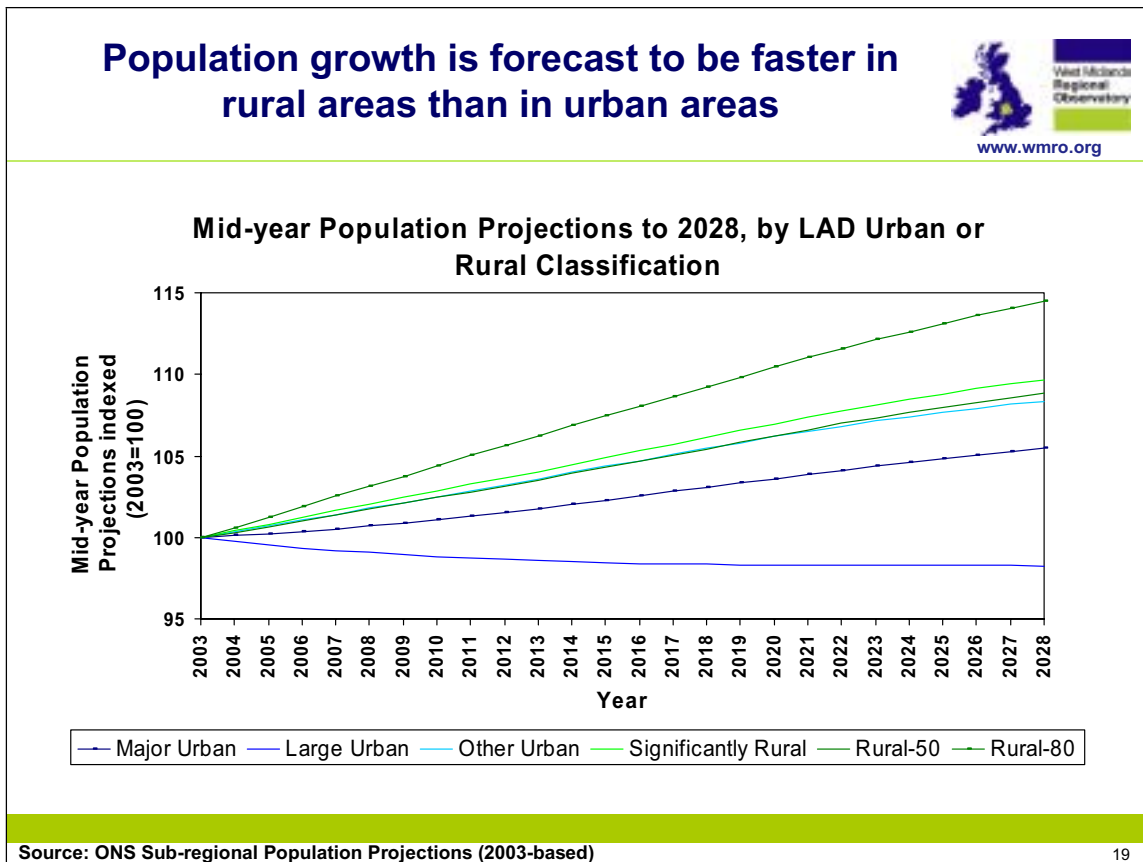
Looking at the population structure by the urban and rural classification reveals some important differences:

- The share of 20-29 year olds is 3-4% higher in major and large urban areas than in the more rural areas, which reflects the tendency for this age group to leave rural areas for urban parts of the region or for other regions;
- The concentration of 30-49 year olds, those most likely to be raising families, is 1-2% higher in other urban and significantly rural areas than elsewhere in the region;
- The percentage of the population aged 50-64 increases with increasing rurality, whilst the percentage aged 65+ is bipolar with high shares in major and large urban areas *and* in rural-50 and rural-80 areas, although the share in rural areas is about 2% higher than in urban areas.

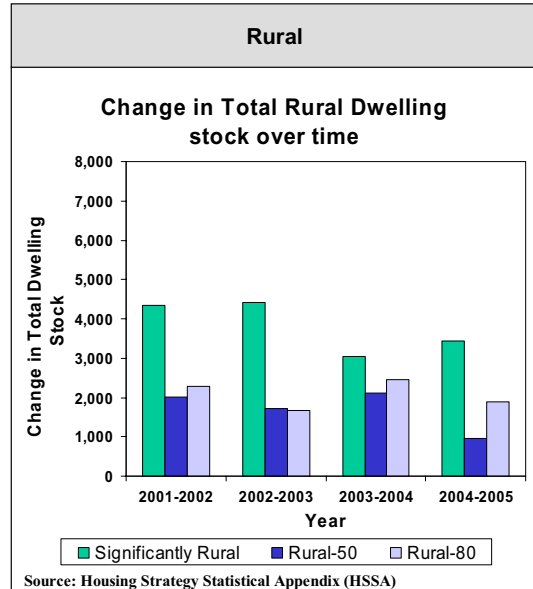
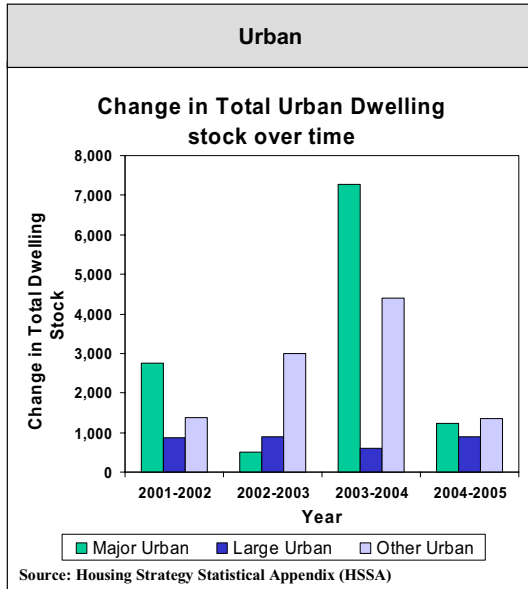
Future time series analysis of age structure and migration trends in the 18-24 age-group and also for families will be important in establishing whether urban and rural renaissance are being successful in slowing the current flows. We would

expect to see the shares of these age groups levelling out between the different areas.

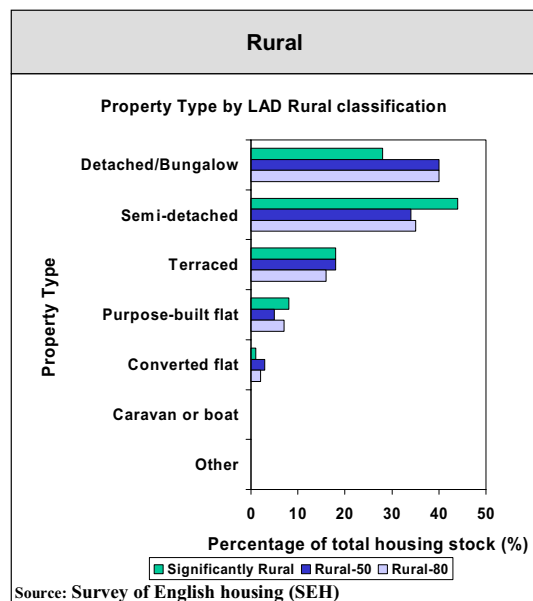
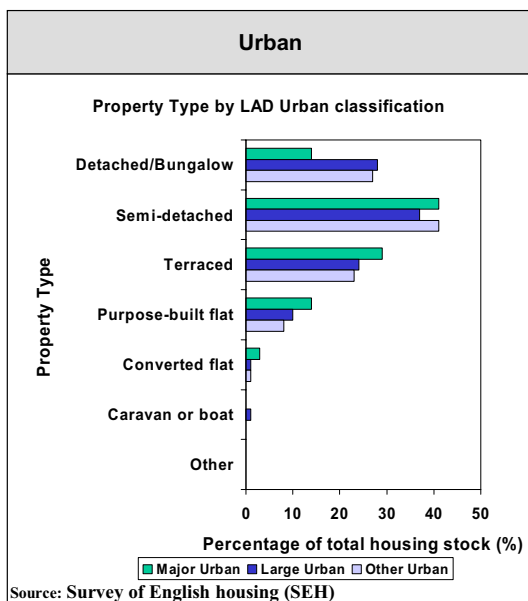
ONS Sub-regional population projections are available to 2028. The projections show population growth in major and other urban areas and a population decline in large urban areas. Particularly high levels of population growth are predicted in more isolated rural areas, and slower rates of growth in other rural areas. These projections incorporate past trends in age structure, fertility and mortality rates and migration flows, which means that if urban and rural renaissance are successful in stopping out-migration of families and younger people respectively, and in improving health levels then we would expect these projected trends not to match actual trends. In particular we would expect to see a greater increase in the major urban areas, and a slower increase in the other urban areas. In isolated rural areas and fringe areas we would expect to see a slower increase in population growth, and a slightly higher growth rate in areas classed as Rural-50, with all areas falling more in-line with each other and higher growth in the younger age-band. Without an annual census it is difficult to measure against this, but the 2011 Census will provide us with some idea, although the projections themselves will have been updated by then.



There is little evidence yet of clear trends in total dwelling stock



Urban housing is much more likely to be terraced or flats



Recent changes in the total dwelling stock in urban areas should be useful in indicating whether the aim of housing policy, to rebalance the level of completions towards the major urban areas, is occurring. Evidence derived from the HSSA (Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix) return is presently inconclusive, since Urban Renaissance would be expected to deliver increasing levels of positive change in dwelling stock in the major urban areas over time – and this trend is not yet clearly apparent. In rural areas the pattern of changes suggests increasing levels in more remote rural areas coupled with a decrease in significantly rural areas, which is in line with expectations if urban renaissance were slowing the out-migration to the rural fringes, and if rural renaissance were achieving more affordable housing for the local population. However, longer-term data will be important in determining whether there is a real trend here, and will need to be combined with the number of affordable completions in rural areas, in order to determine whether rural renaissance aims are being successful.

Data from the Survey of English Housing (SEH) suggests that those housing types which deliver higher densities of dwellings – terraced houses and flats – are most prevalent in the most urban areas. This is in itself not a surprise, but there are clear indications in examining the age of stock of different types that these highest density types are substantially reliant on older stock – most terraced stock in the Region predates 1945 (and the majority of this predates 1919), whilst flat conversions are largely dependent upon pre-1919 stock. Moreover the number of purpose built flats built since 1985 is down on the number built in the preceding 20 years, whilst the largest number of dwellings added to the stock in the Region since 1985 have been detached houses and bungalows. These property types form the biggest part of the housing stock in increasingly rural areas, and combined with the age structure of the housing stock in rural areas, which reveals a high percentage is 1985+ compared to urban areas, would appear to reflect the increased demand in recent years to live in more attractive rural areas, in addition to the level of affluence of those moving here. With successful urban and rural renaissance, over a sufficiently long period of time this trend should disappear and there should instead be a peak in newer properties in major urban areas. With successful rural renaissance it might be expected to see an increase in the share of flats and smaller more affordable properties across all rural areas.

ONS mid-year household estimates predicted growth in all areas in the Region, but overall more household growth was estimated in urban areas than rural between 2001 and 2002, but more growth was estimated in rural areas than urban areas between 2002 and 2003. The HSSA data show higher levels in rural areas in both 2001-2 and 2002-3, which does not support urban or rural renaissance, whilst as already discussed more recent data are inconclusive and this should be monitored over a much longer time period, and would be improved if supported by data on the number of completions by type at local authority level or below, in order to really

determine whether trends in housing completions are indicating successful urban and rural renaissance policies.

The difficulties faced by many rural people in accessing suitable and affordable housing are well documented. Affordability indices can provide an indication of those areas where it is more expensive to settle either because of house prices or income levels; the index calculated here uses median annual income (2003-4) and median house price (2004) and reveals the most expensive areas are rural with South Shropshire, Stratford-on-Avon and Herefordshire requiring 11.8 times the level of income, compared with the least expensive in urban areas including Stoke-on-Trent (5.1) and Wolverhampton (6.6). There is variation within each of the classifications, and Solihull stands out in particular requiring 11.2 times the level of income, which is likely to result from pockets of higher house prices. The affordability index is likely to be heavily influenced by housing typology in these areas, which makes it increasingly difficult to interpret. However rural areas are less affordable, which we would hope to see change over time if rural renaissance were working. There is however a multitude of other factors which could be affecting this, including a lack of housing to rent or buy, and significant pressures on the rural housing market by the growing demand for second or holiday homes. This demand can come from within the region, elsewhere in the country and even from overseas. The census revealed there are around 5,824 second homes in total across the Region, and mapping this at Output Area level reveals a clear pattern for second home density to be greatest within the rural areas, with highest concentrations in Staffordshire Moorlands and South Shropshire, which relates to the presence of the Shropshire Hills AONB and the Peak District National Park respectively, and does appear to relate to lower levels of affordability.

Local Authority level urban or rural classification	Local Authority	Affordability index (1)
Major Urban	Birmingham	8.0
	Dudley	7.8
	Sandwell	7.2
	Solihull	11.2
	Walsall	7.5
	Wolverhampton	6.6
Large Urban	Coventry	7.4
	Newcastle-under-Lyme	6.9
	Stoke-on-Trent UA	5.1
Other Urban	Nuneaton and Bedworth	7.3
	Redditch	9.6
	Tamworth	7.4
	Telford and Wrekin UA	7.4
	Worcester	9.3
Significantly Rural	Bromsgrove	10.2
	Cannock Chase	7.6
	East Staffordshire	7.8
	Rugby	8.7
	Shrewbury and Atcham	8.9
	South Staffordshire	8.7
	Stafford	8.3
	Warwick	10.3
	Wyre Forest	9.0
Rural-50	Herefordshire, County of UA	11.8
	Lichfield	9.4
	Malvern Hills	11.2
	North Warwickshire	7.6
	Staffordshire Moorlands	8.0
Rural-80	Bridgnorth	10.3
	North Shropshire	9.0
	Oswestry	9.5
	South Shropshire	11.8
	Stratford-on-Avon	11.8
	Wychavon	9.9

(1) Index calculated using the ratio of median annual household income (2003-4) to the median price of a house (2004)

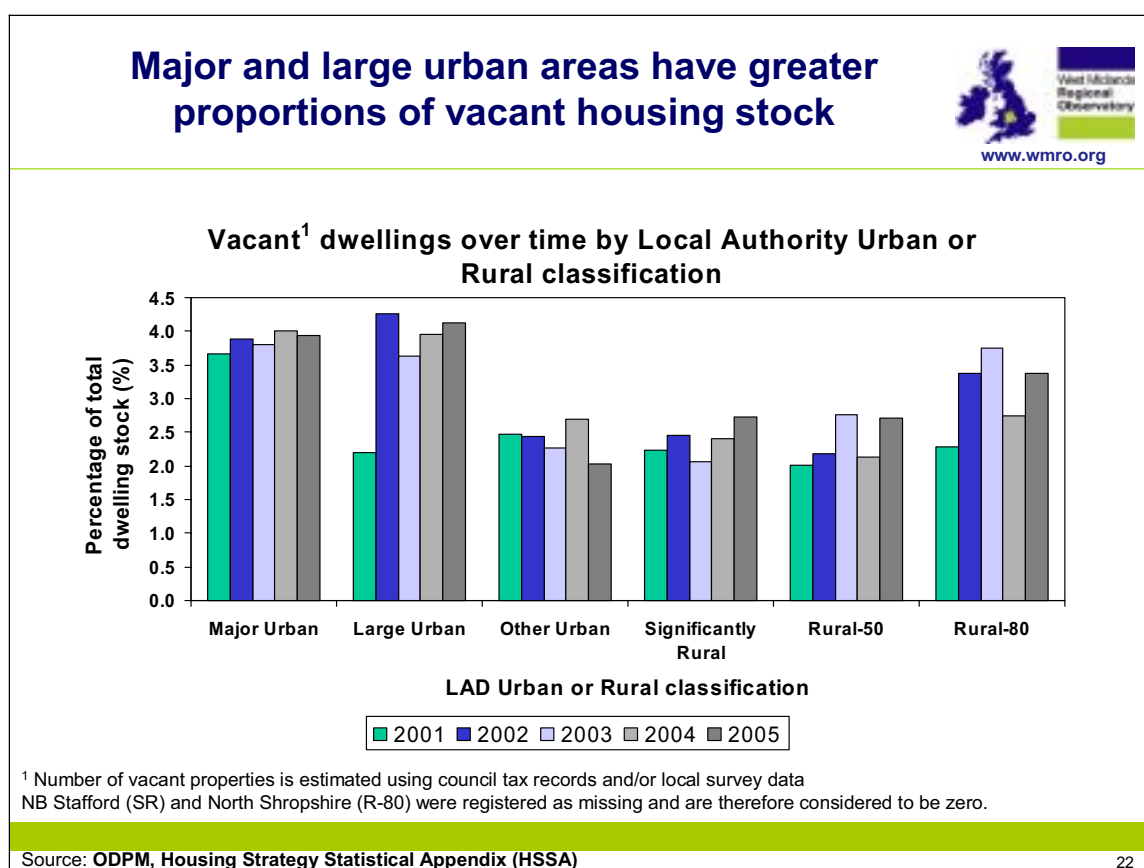
Table 6: Affordability Index for West Midlands Local Authorities (2004)

Source: ODPM and Inland Revenue

The proportion of the dwelling stock in an area that is below the decent homes standard provides an indication of accessibility to good living conditions and its presence can lead to a cycle of decline in an area. Data on this is difficult to obtain for properties other than local authority stock, so a proxy has been used which looks instead at levels of property unfitness. The share of property that is unfit has declined most significantly in major urban areas, and in all other areas has remained relatively stable. When ownership is taken into account, the majority of the unfit stock is owner occupied or private rented accommodation, with local authority (LA) and registered social landlord (RSL) stock achieving slightly higher improvements

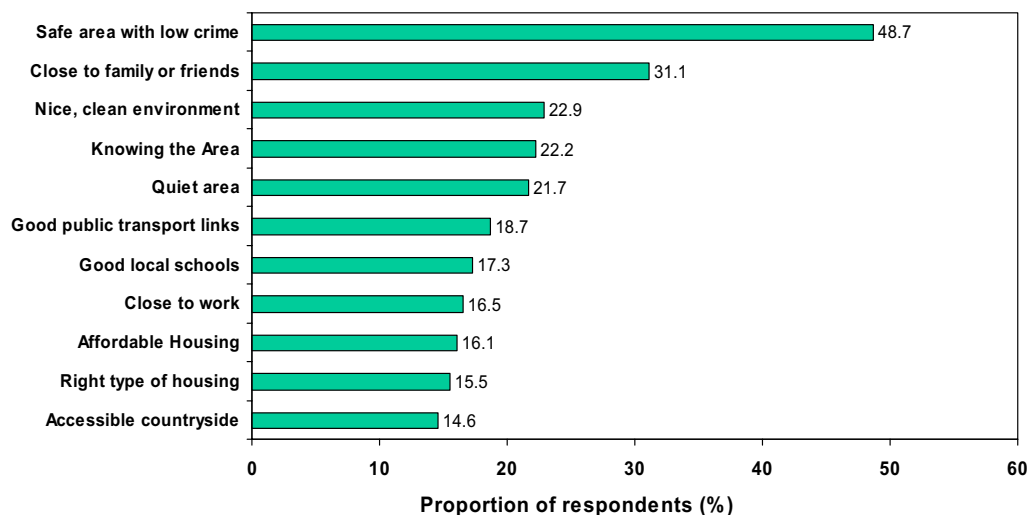
in this area. The LA and RSL stock has seen the largest improvements, and since much of this is concentrated in urban areas, this explains the visible trend. In rural areas Rural-50 areas have improved the most, but rural renaissance should lead to declining levels across all of these areas, and not just one. Nevertheless, improvements in the Rural-50 areas of the Region are one modest contribution to Rural Renaissance.

The proportion of vacant properties can provide an indication of areas where there is low-demand for housing, which may indicate that these are undesirable areas or areas in which the available housing stock doesn't meet current demand either in terms of size, type or condition. The proportion of total dwelling stock which is vacant is highest in major and large urban areas and there has not been a downward trend over the last 3 years as might be expected if urban renaissance were occurring. Rural-80 areas have the highest share of vacant properties in rural parts of the Region. There has been a decrease in vacant stock in Rural-50 and rural-80 areas between 2003 and 2004 which could be a positive sign for Rural Renaissance policy. Longer term data is important in monitoring this, and information on the period for which properties have been vacant will add detail to help more informed assessment of urban and rural renaissance.



Community safety is seen as the most important criterion when choosing where to live

Key criteria in choosing where to live



Source: Regional Lifestyle Survey 2005 © WMRO and WMPHO

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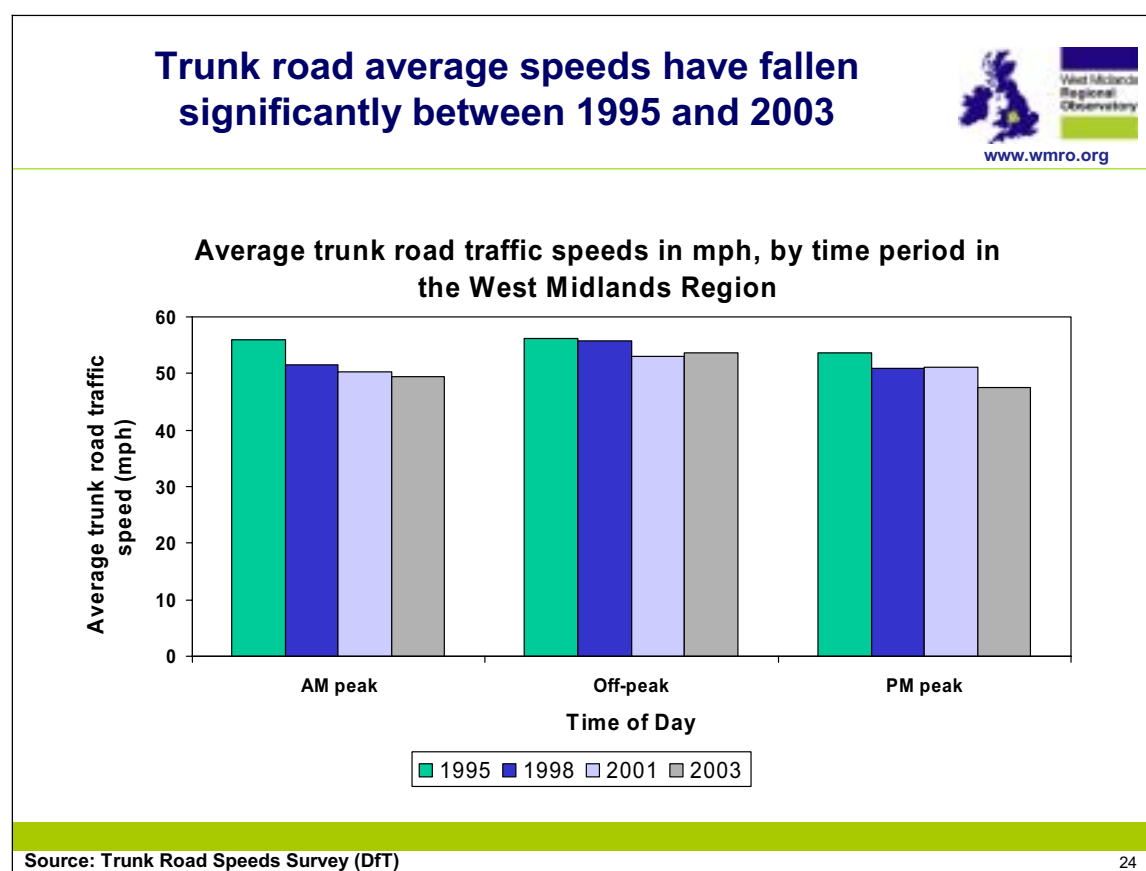
Work from the Regional Lifestyle Survey, reported in the 2005 State of the Region Update Report, indicates clearly that the choice of residential location amongst residents is driven by a number of key factors. At a regional and sub-regional level, quality of life issues – community safety, environment and tranquillity – and a sense of familiarity and belonging characterised by proximity to family and friends and knowledge of an area - are pre-eminent. Less important, but still significant are practical issues such as public transport links, good schools and proximity to work, along with specifically housing related criteria such as affordability and access to the right type of housing.

It is important to understand the impact of parenthood on these factors, since the choices of this group have a big effect on migration levels from urban to rural areas. The top factor for parents is still a safe area with low crime, however more than two in five are concerned about the proximity of good schools for their children, and this is highest for parents living in other urban areas (45%) and major urban areas (44%) and lowest in Rural-50 areas (39%). Other factors are of similar importance for parents and non-parents, although parents are less likely as a group to cite good public transport links, a quiet area, or access to the countryside as primary criteria in choosing where to live.

The impact of quality of life issues on urban and rural renaissance is dealt with elsewhere in this chapter, but it is clear that these factors too have a significant impact upon the choice of where to live. If these quality of life issues are perceived as positive, then areas will attract people, if they are perceived as poor, then they

will act to push those with a choice towards other locations. In contrast the pull of family, friends and familiarity with an area may act to retain residents in urban areas, providing policy makers can address quality of life issues, and also deliver high quality services and affordable, high quality housing that people want to live in. We know from this source that urban dwellers are even more concerned than the regional average with community safety, housing affordability and good public transport links – so these would seem to be particularly pertinent areas for policy makers in retaining urban residents.

3.1.5 Transport



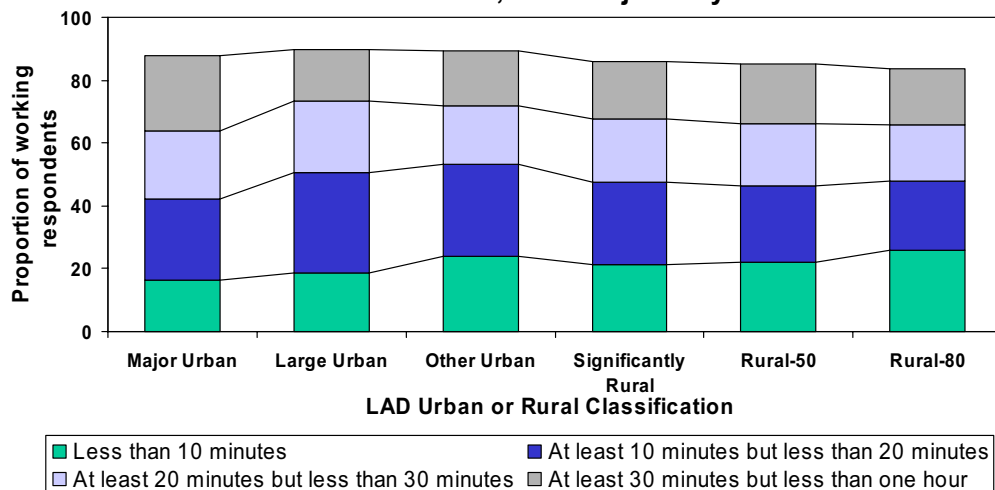
Trunk road traffic speeds in the Region have been falling steadily since 1995, particularly in the morning and evening peaks. Causal factors are likely to be both increased traffic volume (DfT Regional Transport Statistics suggest that in this Region as in the country as a whole, traffic volumes on motorways, and on urban and rural roads continue to rise), which in terms of noise, pollution and disruption to travel is counter to the aims of urban and rural renaissance, but is also due to deliberate policies of reducing speed limits and increased traffic camera enforcement of speed over this period. The latter is supportive of urban renaissance aims, since it has the potential to reduce the impact of vehicles for other road users and for residents living close to trunk roads. Rising congestion and reducing traffic speeds may in the short term cause increased difficulty in urban areas, but they may also have the positive effect of changing preferences amongst transport users,

making public transport, cycling and walking more attractive in relative terms. We may only see the impact of this later, since the response from public transport providers will necessarily lag increases in demand (in the case of rail and light rail, potentially by many years), in rising public transport provision and use, and reducing levels of car use. However, there is little evidence of this process occurring yet. Sub-regional data is important in establishing whether the same patterns are seen in urban and rural areas across the region, and to determine whether there are any important differences between local authorities.

It takes longest to get to work in major urban areas



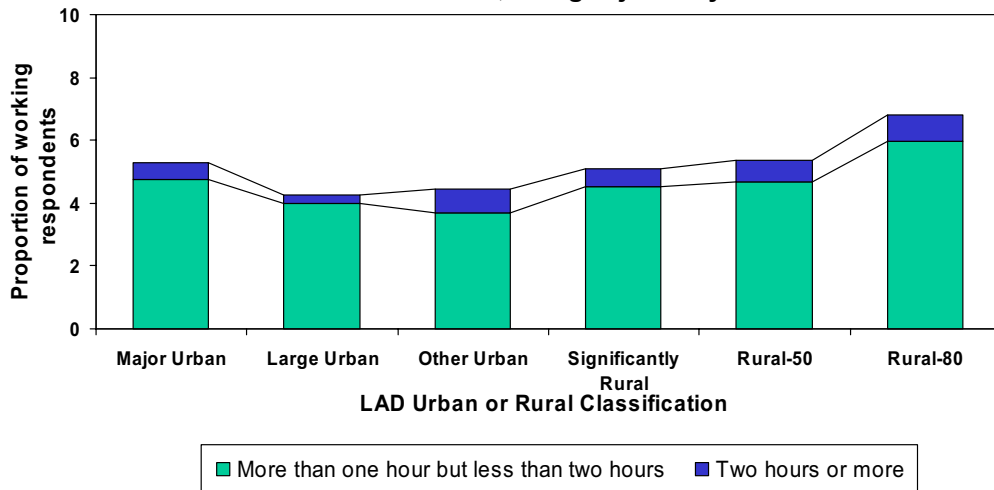
Average duration of journey to work by LAD Urban or Rural classification; Shorter journeys



Source: Regional Lifestyle Survey © WMRO and WMPHO

Very long journey to work times are most common in major urban and remote rural areas

Average duration of journey to work by LAD Urban or Rural classification; Longer journeys

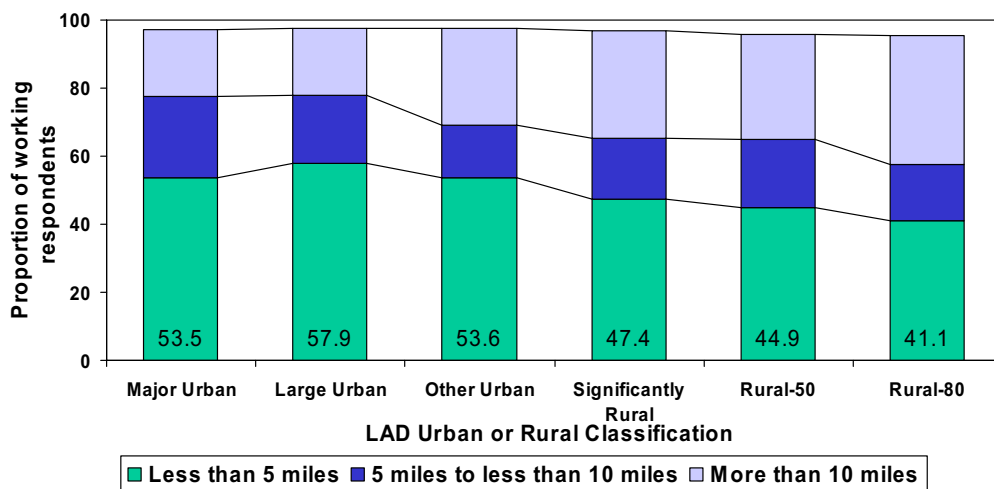


Source: Regional Lifestyle Survey © WMRO and WMPHO

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Rural dwellers travel the furthest to work

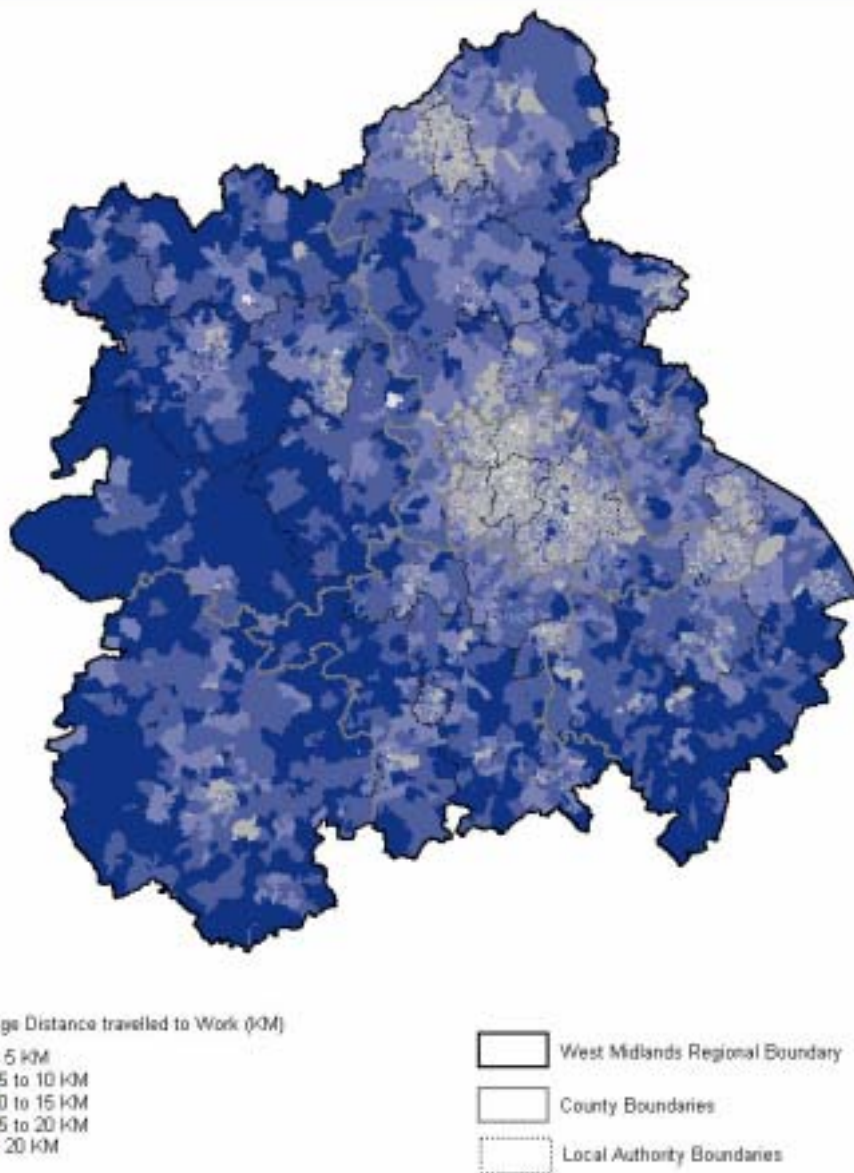
Average distance travelled to work by LAD Urban or Rural classification



Source: Regional Lifestyle Survey © WMRO and WMPHO

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Average Distance residents travel to work in the West Midlands Region by Census Output Area



Source: Census 2001
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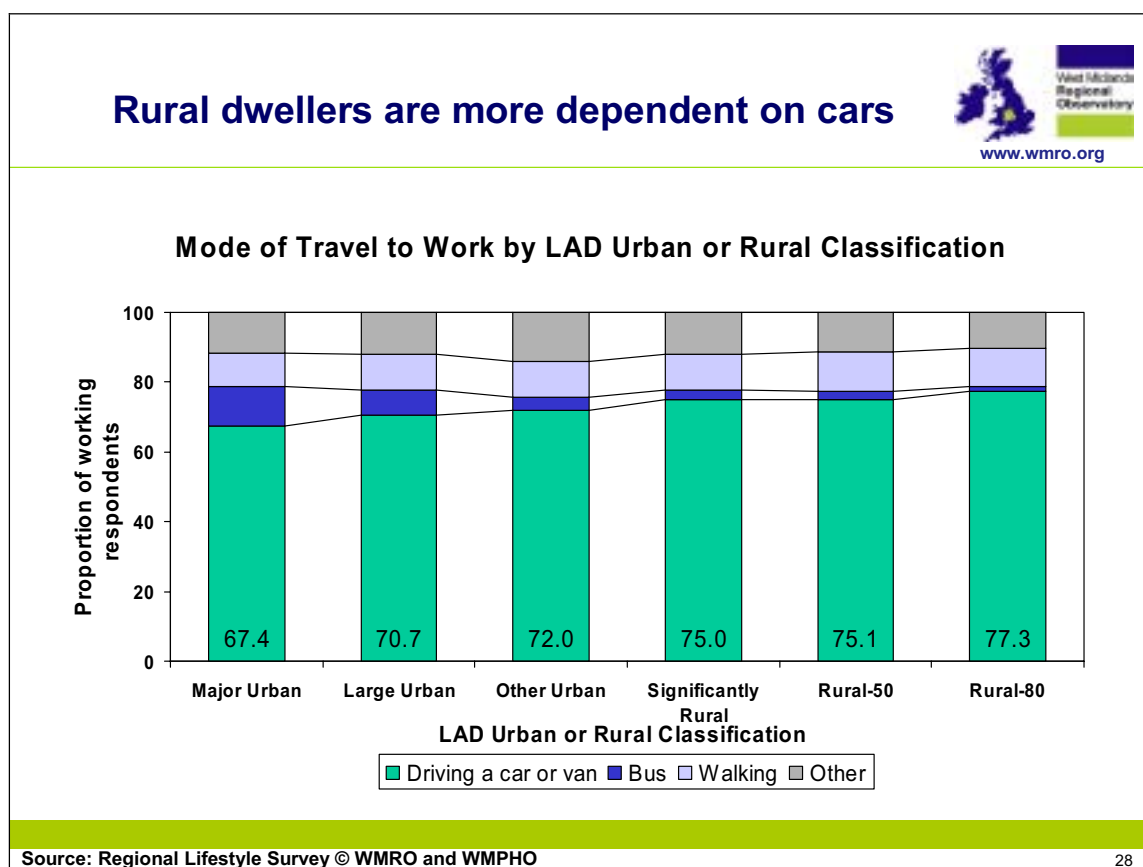
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Residents of major urban areas in the Region are more likely to have longer journeys to work than any other group outside those living in the most remote rural areas, and are most likely to have a journey to work which takes longer than 30 minutes, according to the Regional Lifestyle Survey carried out in 2005. This is despite residents of major and large urban areas living closer to their place of work than others in the Region, and could be contributing to out-migration flows. There

will be a large impact on the roads and traffic congestion if out-migration to rural areas continues. With the exception of home workers, rural residents tend to travel further to get to work suggesting that proximity to work is not the major factor influencing their choice of where to live, although despite travelling further the Regional Lifestyle Survey reveals that journeys of rural residents are not any longer than those of major urban residents.

Whilst distance travelled to work is strongly related to increasing rural location, it is clear that in the major urban areas, affluence also plays a significant part. Mapping of small area Census data indicates that average travel distances to work are greater in parts of the major urban areas which are more affluent – for example in the west of Wolverhampton, the south west of Dudley, the eastern side of Walsall, parts of north and south central Birmingham, and the western and southern fringes of the Potteries conurbation.

While long and congested journeys to work may be related to home working, affluence may also have a significant role; evidence shows this is highest in major urban areas and more remote rural areas. Making this available as an option could also help people by giving them a greater choice about where to live, which could have positive impacts in terms of urban renaissance, but could also impact adversely on rural renaissance when combined with the strong aspiration to live in the more desirable accessible rural parts of the region. Further work and better time-series data is required to explore this in more depth.



Urban residents are much more likely to travel to work by a mode of transport other than the private car (though car use still provides the mode of travel for most urban residents (67.4%)), and bus use and frequency of bus use are much more prevalent with increasing urbanity. However, bus use is greatest amongst the youngest and oldest in the population, whilst car use for commuting is much higher in more affluent parts of the Region's urban areas (mirroring the pattern seen for distance travelled), suggesting that the likelihood of bus use is likely to be driven by necessity as much as choice, and that with increasing affluence, and access, residents will choose to travel by car.

Rural residents are most likely to travel to work by car (77.3%), which could be related to distance, cost, affluence and/or lack of suitable alternatives. A high proportion of rural residents never use the bus, with those living in more remote areas the highest. The 18-24 age group is the most likely to use the bus in rural areas, probably because they do not have constant access to a car or can't yet drive, although a higher proportion of this age band travels to work in a car compared with urban areas suggesting there is a greater incentive to learn to drive earlier amongst rural residents.

There is a much weaker relationship between train use and urban or rural classification (though it is highest in major urban areas), suggesting that use of the train network for travel to work is dependent on proximity to the network – and perhaps also that the urban rail network is insufficiently developed in this Region to meet its potential in contributing to reductions in car travel. An absence of train stations and infrequent services in many rural areas could also reduce its attractiveness as an alternative to the car.

Increasing levels of bus and train use, coupled with declining reliance on cars, would be clear indicators of positive developments in urban and rural renaissance, but evidence presented in the 2004 State of the Region Report suggests that there is as yet little evidence of increase in regional bus and rail patronage. Time series data on mode of travel, both for journey to work and for leisure, is important in monitoring this. Relative costs could be an important causal factor here in addition to frequency of services, as the ability to share a journey by car with others means that the average cost per passenger mile (taking into account all expenditure except for depreciation) is actually cheaper than for the bus and train. Importantly, the DfT reports (8) that motoring costs have remained stable while bus and train fares have risen which is another disincentive to leave the car for public transport, while the amount spent increases with affluence, although those in lower income deciles are more likely to travel by more expensive public transport modes because of lower car ownership levels. However, despite increased dependence on the cheaper mode of travel, rural households spend the most on travel per week. Evidence suggests that 25-54 year olds are least likely to use public transport – this is the group which are most likely to have families, and present costs of public transport will be a major deterrent to this group. GIS has become an important tool in transport

planning and its use will be invaluable in analysing existing public transport routes and identifying gaps for future provision.

3.1.6 Lifestyle and Aspirations

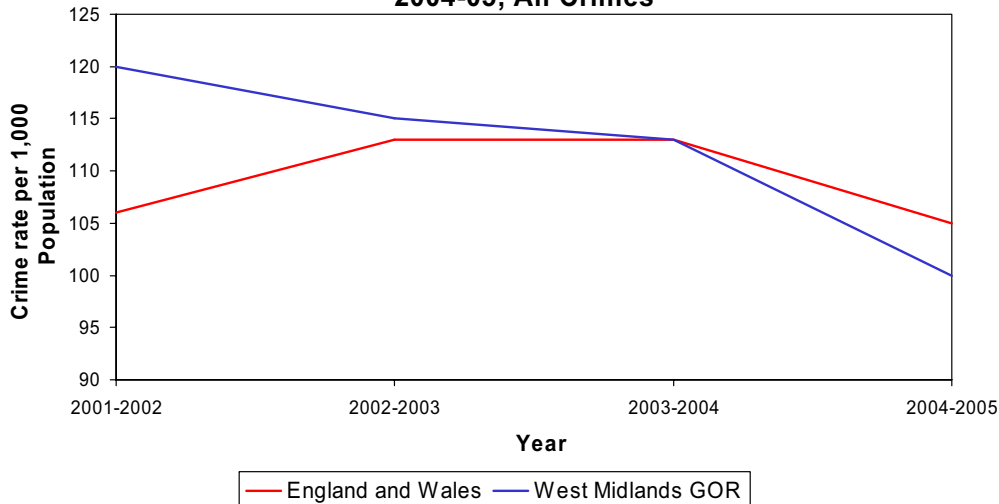
As discussed earlier in this chapter the Regional Lifestyle Survey revealed that more residents aspire to live in accessible rural areas than anywhere else in the Region. There are many possible factors driving this; many factors influence people's decision to live in an area. Community safety comes out as the most important factor across all urban and rural areas. When combined with data on recorded levels of crime we find that although overall crime rates have gone down in all urban and rural areas, evidence from the Regional Lifestyle Survey reveals that residents do not perceive this to be the case with a high proportion of respondents feeling less safe in their own homes than 2 years ago. This is highest in major urban areas (22%) and decreases as you move from urban into rural areas, being lowest in Rural-80 areas (17%). An even higher proportion feel less safe in their wider neighbourhood now compared with 2 years ago, and again this is highest in major urban areas (29%) and lowest in Rural-80 areas (19%). When asked whether they felt crime had increased in their neighbourhood over the past two years, this reflects the findings of safety reported above. Residents of major urban areas are most likely to have been a victim of crime in the last year and this decreases with increasing rurality.

Crime rates in the Region as a whole have gone down and are now below the national average. Burglary was the third most likely crime to have been experienced by residents in the region and rates have gone down overall while violent crimes have increased marginally, both of which are in line with the national trend. Sub-regional data reveals major urban areas have the highest burglary rate, but this has gone down steeply over the last 6 years which is a positive indication of urban renaissance. Significantly rural areas have the next highest rates, and this has not decreased at the same fast rate as in major urban areas, which suggests that there is more work to do here to stop outflow from this area to more remote rural areas where rates are lower and continue to fall.

Recorded Regional crime rates have fallen below the national average



Recorded Crime Rates per 1,000 Population, 2001-02 and 2004-05; All Crimes



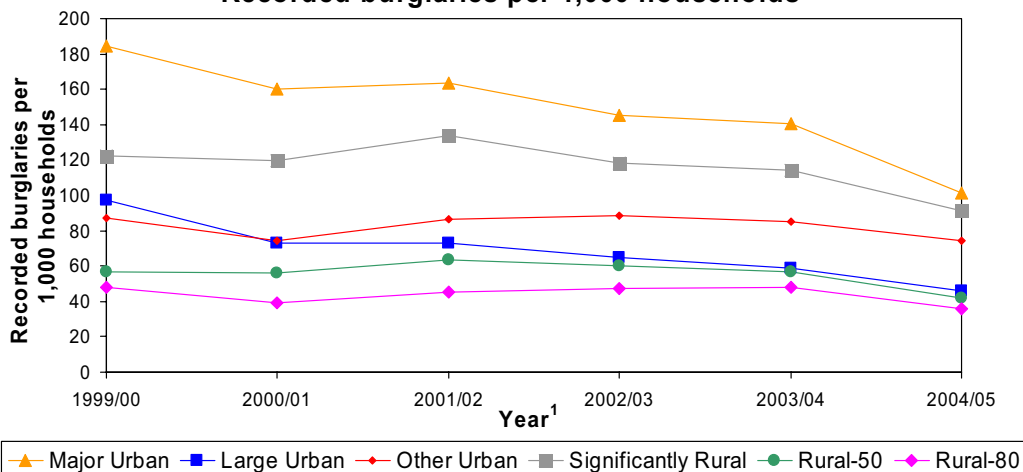
Source: Home Office

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Burglary rates are falling fastest in major urban areas



Recorded burglaries per 1,000 households^{1,2}



1. The introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) in April 2002 means that data for 2002/03 is not comparable with previous years at CDRP level. The introduction of the NCRS by those forces which had not already done so has had the effect of inflating the total number of crimes by about 10% though this varies between offence group and Police Force Area.
2. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) have been used as a proxy for local authorities.

Source: Home Office

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One of the reasons for the disconnection between incidence and fear of crime may relate to the fact that when asked which crime and disorder issues are of greatest concern in their neighbourhood, respondents in all urban and rural areas listed issues of disorder above those bigger crimes which contribute towards official crime statistics, with the top problem being litter, and then in urban areas troublesome teenagers or children. Burglaries and dangerous driving followed behind these. The Regional Lifestyle Survey also reveals that across the Region the top crimes experienced by residents are vandalism or damage to property followed by theft from a vehicle. These results from the Regional Lifestyle Survey can help to feed into policies aimed at improving neighbourhood quality and quality of life, and to monitor future success levels in this area. While crime trends are positive in terms of driving urban renaissance, fear of crime is still acting against this.

The condition of green space in urban local authorities is reported as fair or stable, while in 2000 the overall picture at national level was one of declining condition. Recent Government initiatives recognising urban green space as a priority has had a positive effect, meaning many areas have been restored which would previously have been neglected, attracting anti social behaviour and litter. However, despite this anti-social behaviour and litter still top peoples' lists of concerns, particularly within urban areas.

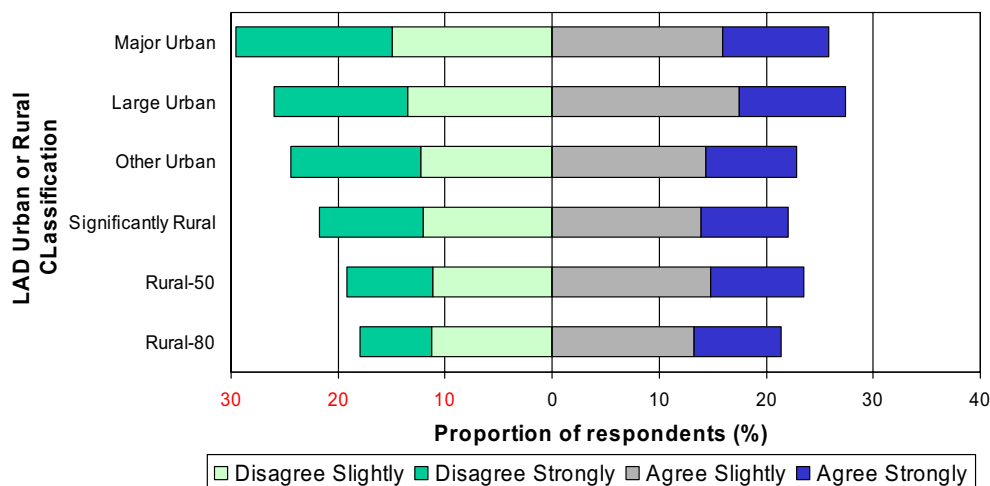
Public transport is fairly low on the list of important factors when choosing where to live, but it is notably more important in major and large urban areas. With successful urban and rural renaissance we would hope to see this factor rise in importance, and rising in rural areas as well as in urban areas.

The Regional Lifestyle Survey provides us with an overall measure of the level of neighbourhood satisfaction, and indicates that most people seem satisfied with their current neighbourhood and therefore seem unlikely to want to move because of neighbourhood or community problems. The highest levels of dissatisfaction are in major and large urban areas, and a small majority of residents in major urban areas feel that their neighbourhood has not improved over the last 2 years, both suggesting urban renaissance is not yet having its intended impact, and there are still high dissatisfaction levels amongst residents contributing to strong motivations to leave these areas. The RLS does find that the majority of people that are actually already planning to move are most likely to cite proximity to work as the driving factor behind this, which may be related to long journey times in urban areas and increasing congestion.

Urban dwellers are more likely to think that their neighbourhood is getting worse



Indication of whether residents feel their neighbourhood has improved over the last 2 years



Source: Regional Lifestyle Survey © WMRO & WMPHO

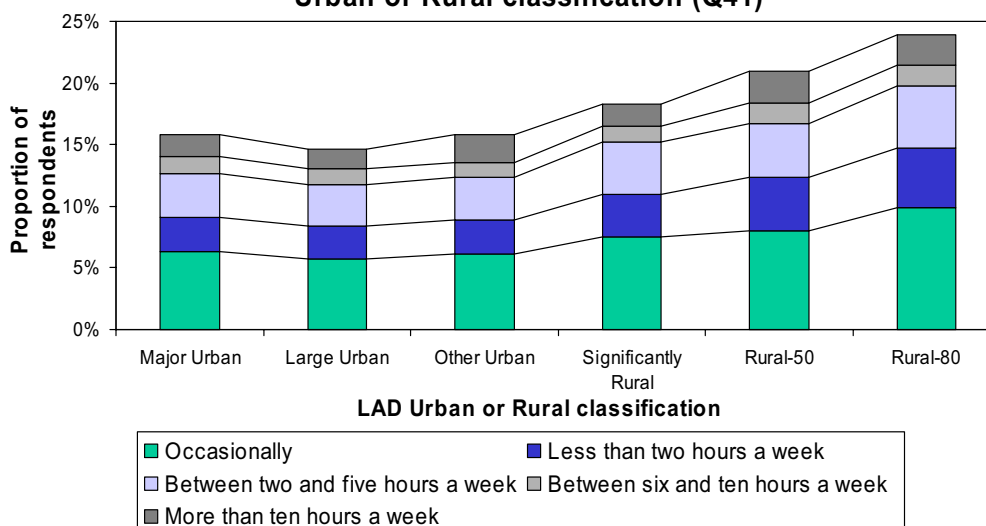
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Overall there is a strong sense that people from different backgrounds can live together harmoniously across urban and rural areas. The Regional Lifestyle Survey revealed that although residents generally don't feel able to influence decisions affecting their neighbourhood at an individual level, they did increasingly feel able to influence these by acting together, with the strongest sense of community in the most remote rural areas, despite the likelihood of properties being more dispersed in these areas. With successful urban renaissance we would hope to see a growing sense of community in all urban areas, and would hope rural renaissance would drive up other rural areas to be more in line with these remoter parts. Voluntary activity can be an indication of engagement with the wider community and can link with people's attitudes about the community within which they live. On this basis, it is unsurprising that voluntary activity is highest in more remote rural areas, however it is slightly surprising that major urban areas experience higher levels than other urban areas.

Voluntary activity is higher in rural areas



**Frequency of doing regular, unpaid, voluntary work by LAD
Urban or Rural classification (Q41)**



Source: Regional Lifestyle Survey © WMRO & WMPHO

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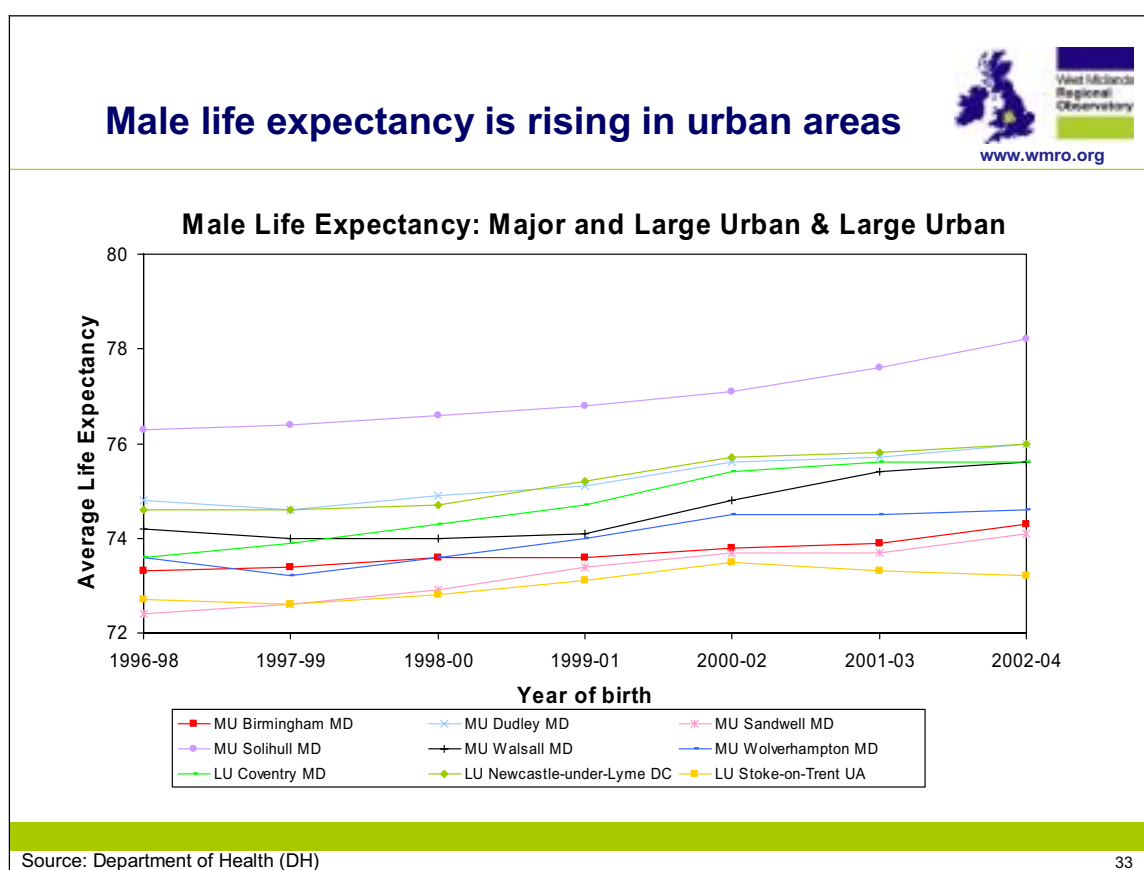
3.1.7 Health and Services

All health data currently available is of limited use in understanding urban and rural issues. This is because it is in the form of age-standardised, 3-year-average rates, and is available down to LAD level. Raw numbers, and preferably at smaller areas are necessary to interpret this accurately using the Urban and Rural classification schemes now available. The Institute of Rural Health (IRH) has just published a rural health information guide, funded by DEFRA, entitled “Think Rural Health Data” which identifies areas for improvement in the collection and analysis of relevant data.

Evidence nationally and regionally suggests that there are issues of rural deprivation and social exclusion which are impacting on health in rural communities, and which are challenging the idea of the rural idyll. However, much of the evidence about why rural health is different at more local levels is anecdotal. A growing number of studies have identified a range of rural issues, including mental health issues and suicide amongst farming populations (Hawton, 1998) and substance misuse amongst young people in rural communities (Buchan, 2001). Only small area data will enable us to determine whether these issues are significant in the rural West

Midlands. Using the best data available at this stage, which is LAD data, we can get some idea of the overall trends:

- Female life expectancy shows a clear upward trend in rural areas, but has a less pronounced trend in urban areas. There is however significant variation within the different classifications, notably Solihull has high life expectancy which is above many rural areas. Male life expectancy shows an upward trend in urban and rural areas, which could be a positive indication of urban and rural renaissance.

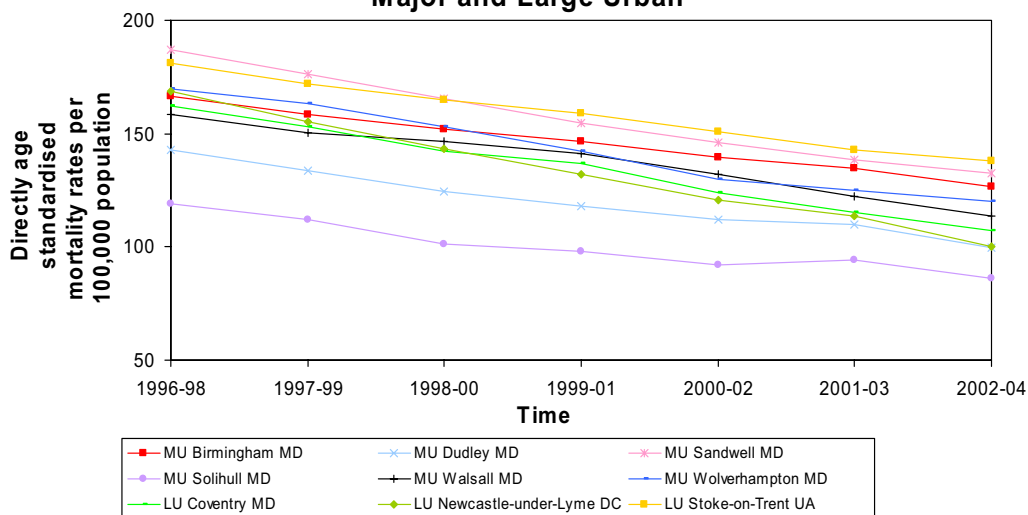


- Early mortality rates from all cancers shows a slight downward trend. Less accessible rural areas had much lower rates to start with. Over time we would hope to see rates come into line with each other across all urban and rural areas and for urban areas eventually to fall in line with those in rural areas.
- Early mortality rates from circulatory disease have shown a steady decline in urban areas with rates now falling in line with those elsewhere in the Region. This is a positive indication of improving health across urban and rural areas and is in line with expectations of urban and rural renaissance.

Mortality rates from circulatory disease are falling steadily in urban areas



Circulatory Disease Mortality rate for under 75's; Major and Large Urban



Rates are 3-year rolling averages

Data comprising the 1999-01 and 2000-02 averages are not strictly comparable and should be treated with caution.

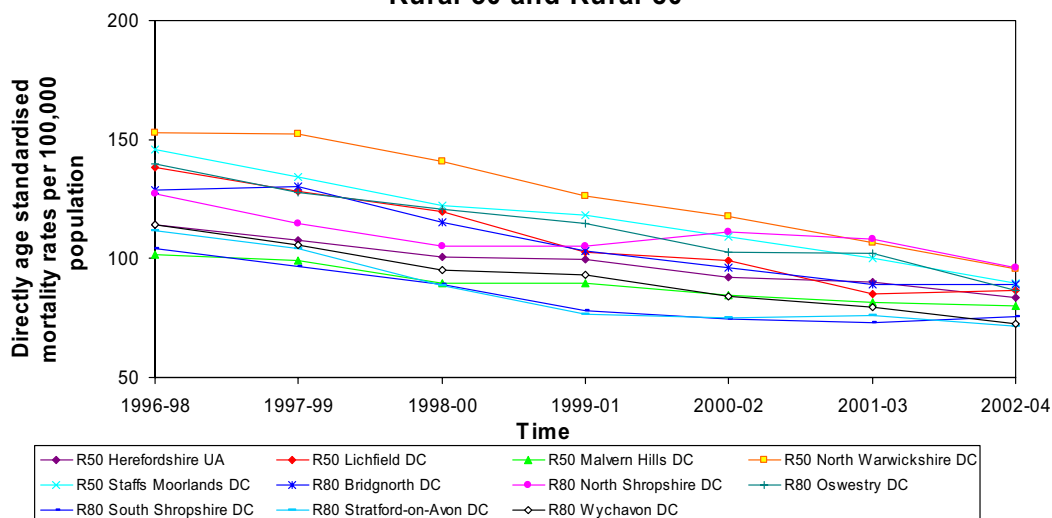
Source: Department of Health (DH)

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Mortality from circulatory disease is also falling in the more remote rural areas



Circulatory Disease Mortality rate for under 75's; Rural-50 and Rural-80



Rates are 3-year rolling averages

Data comprising the 1999-01 and 2000-02 averages are not strictly comparable and should be treated with caution.

Source: Department of Health (DH)

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The health data presented here appear to show some positive signs, but access to data which can be analysed using the urban/rural classifications will be important in monitoring this and analysing it with better accuracy. Over the next few years we would hope to see early mortality rates in urban areas falling in line with those in rural areas, removing this inequality.

The Countryside Agency publishes data on access to services, with a rural focus. This is available at census output area level and allows us to see very small scale variations by mapping it. For the indicator set three types of service were chosen, post offices, supermarkets and GPs. The closure of rural post offices has been the subject of much media attention, and the data reveals that in rural areas more households are likely to be further away from their nearest post office than urban areas. However when we consider the change in the number of households within 2km of their nearest post office the most remote rural areas have actually gained services which may result from innovative solutions such as integration with the local shop or pub. It is the less sparse rural areas which have experienced a net loss in access to this service.

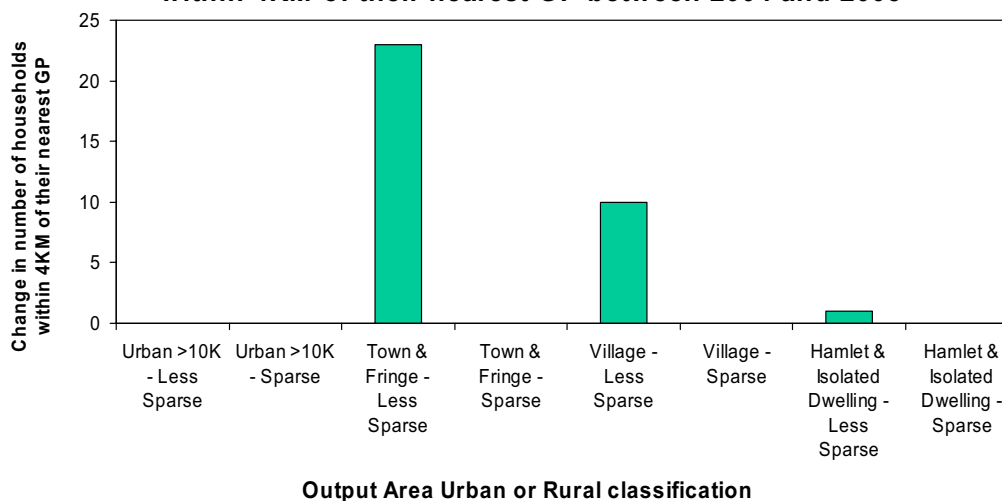
Supermarkets have also been the focus of much attention in rural areas, with smaller supermarkets thought to be being removed from the market as a result of larger store monopolisation. Mapping this reveals the main accessibility issues are located on the fringe of the Region's boundaries, particularly central and southern Shropshire and the Teme Valley, areas which fall within the Rural Regeneration Zone, and the Staffordshire Moorlands.

Access to GPs has been static or increasing across urban and rural areas, which is a positive indication as it does not reveal decreasing service accessibility. Town and fringe areas have significantly improved levels of services which is likely to be a secondary effect of migration to these areas from the urban core and could be a negative sign in terms of urban renaissance. Mapping this reveals lower accessibility in rural areas. Continued monitoring over time of this is important, in combination with population growth and age structure.

Access to GPs has improved



Change in number of households within 4KM of their nearest GP between 2004 and 2005



Source: Countryside Agency Rural Services Series (2004 and 2005)

36

Service accessibility issues are historically of less concern in urban areas than rural areas, but successful urban renaissance will increase the importance of monitoring this in urban areas as well. This data source is ideal for this, although it does not currently provide any data on adult learning services which are also of interest. The Regional Lifestyle Survey asked about adult learning centres, and revealed that a high proportion of residents live further than 5 miles from their nearest one although this is highest in more remote rural areas suggesting these services are harder to access in rural areas than urban areas.

3.1.8 Environment

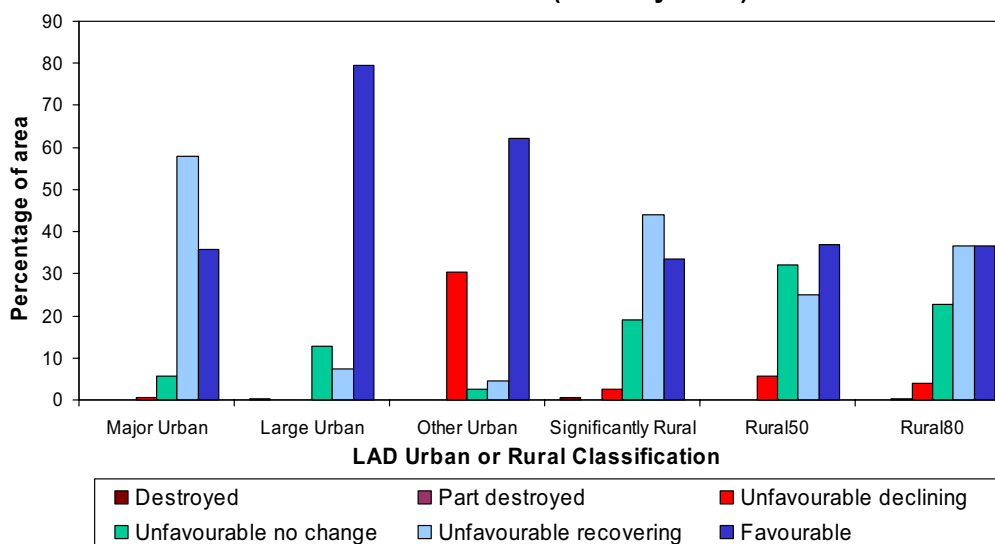
Urban green space in the form of good quality parks and green spaces contributes significantly to both perceptions of neighbourhood quality and to quality of life for residents. The ODPM aims for the majority of local areas to have at least one quality green space by 2008, with a Green Flag Award to prove it, and for over 75% of people to be satisfied with their green spaces. The 2005 NAO survey of urban local authorities reports that nationally the declining condition of parks has now been reversed (9). In the urban parts of the West Midlands the area of land classified as green space unsurprisingly increases as you move away from the urban core, but the pattern is not the same across all local authorities, as is demonstrated

by the large proportion of green space in the major urban area of Solihull (69%) and the large urban area of Newcastle under Lyme (85%) with most other urban areas having between 30-50%. The increased level of investment in urban green spaces may also be a contributing factor to SSSI site condition, with a greater area of SSSI sites in all urban areas being in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition, and a lower area in bad or partly destroyed condition compared to in rural areas, though it should also be noted that there is a much larger total area in rural areas.

Urban SSSIs are more likely to be in favourable or recovering condition



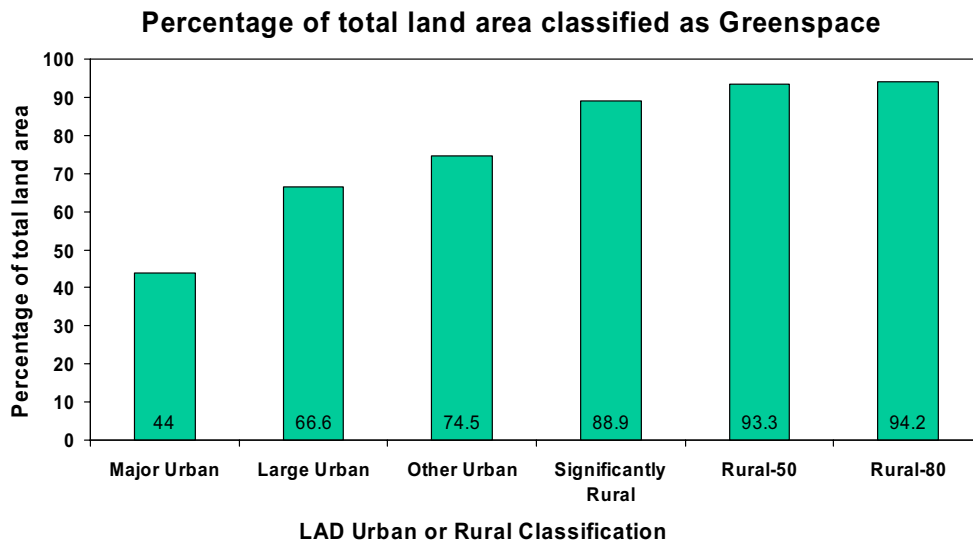
SSSI Site Condition (January 2006)



Source: English Nature

37

Urban areas have substantial proportions of their land area classified as Greenspace



Source: ODPM Generalised Land Use Database (2001 experimental)

38

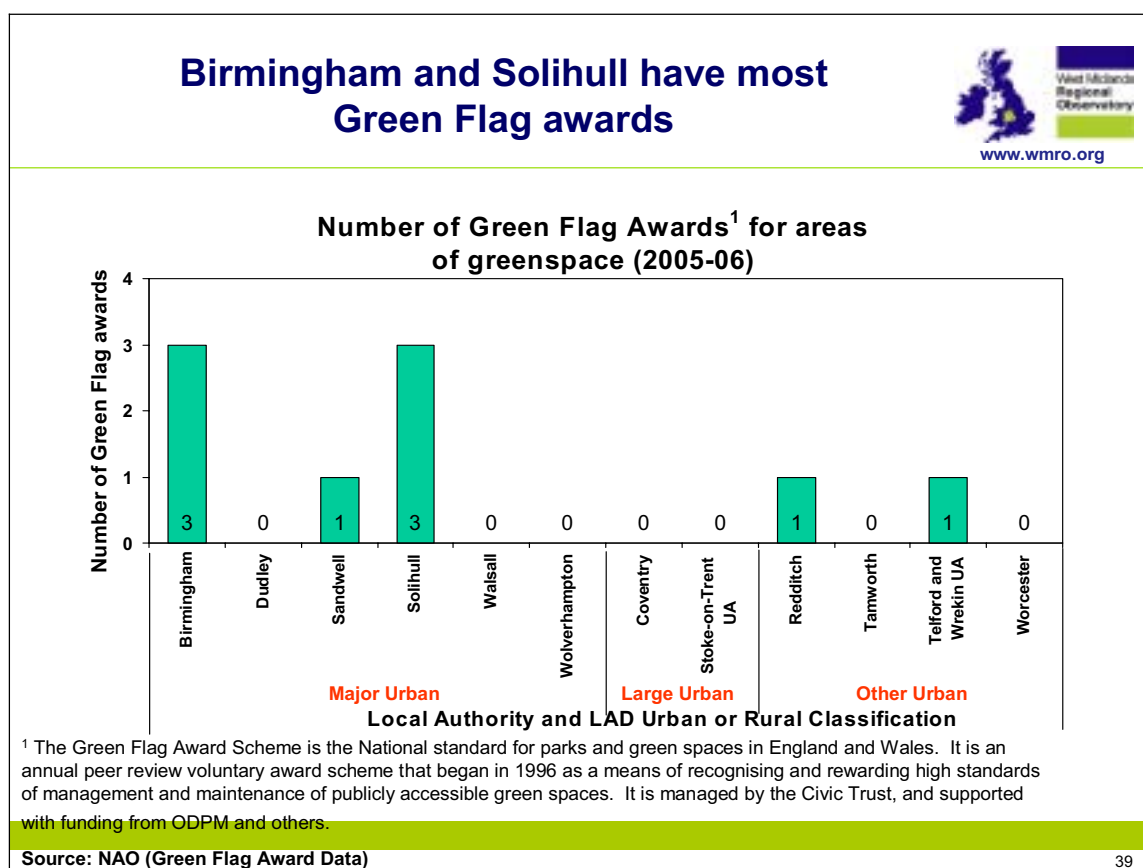
¹ The GLUD definition of greenspace is inclusive, capturing a lot of different types of greenspace;

- £ Includes areas of natural/semi-natural vegetation such as woodland, scrub, heathland, bog/marsh, and grassland.
- £ Includes managed agricultural fields (e.g. cropland, improved pasture), allotment gardens, recreational uses (e.g. playing fields, cricket pitches, parks), cemeteries and graveyards. [Areas of water, path, road or hard surface within these uses are NOT included.]
- £ Includes small areas of grassland within the urban environment e.g. within residential areas (excluding domestic gardens) and associated with commercial uses.
- £ Includes areas of natural surface alongside roads/tracks (i.e. verges).
- £ Includes areas of natural surface alongside railways (i.e. embankments/cuttings).
- £ EXCLUDES domestic gardens

Despite having significantly less green space area than many other urban areas, Birmingham and Wolverhampton have fairly high levels of resident satisfaction with these (67% and 63% respectively) although these do fall below the ODPM target, and Birmingham with 3 Green Flag Awards² in 2005-06 has already exceeded this ODPM target. Evidence would suggest that availability of quality urban green space is not a problem within the Region and is therefore unlikely to be a significant factor in driving out-migration. Satisfaction levels are on the whole acceptable, with the exception of Sandwell, and are therefore likely to have low

² The Green Flag Award Scheme is the National standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. It is an annual peer review voluntary award scheme that began in 1996 as a means of recognising and rewarding high standards of management and maintenance of publicly accessible green spaces. It is managed by the Civic Trust, and supported with funding from ODPM and others.

impact on neighbourhood satisfaction levels. Improved knowledge of these areas may simply be what is needed to improve historical perceptions of urban areas.



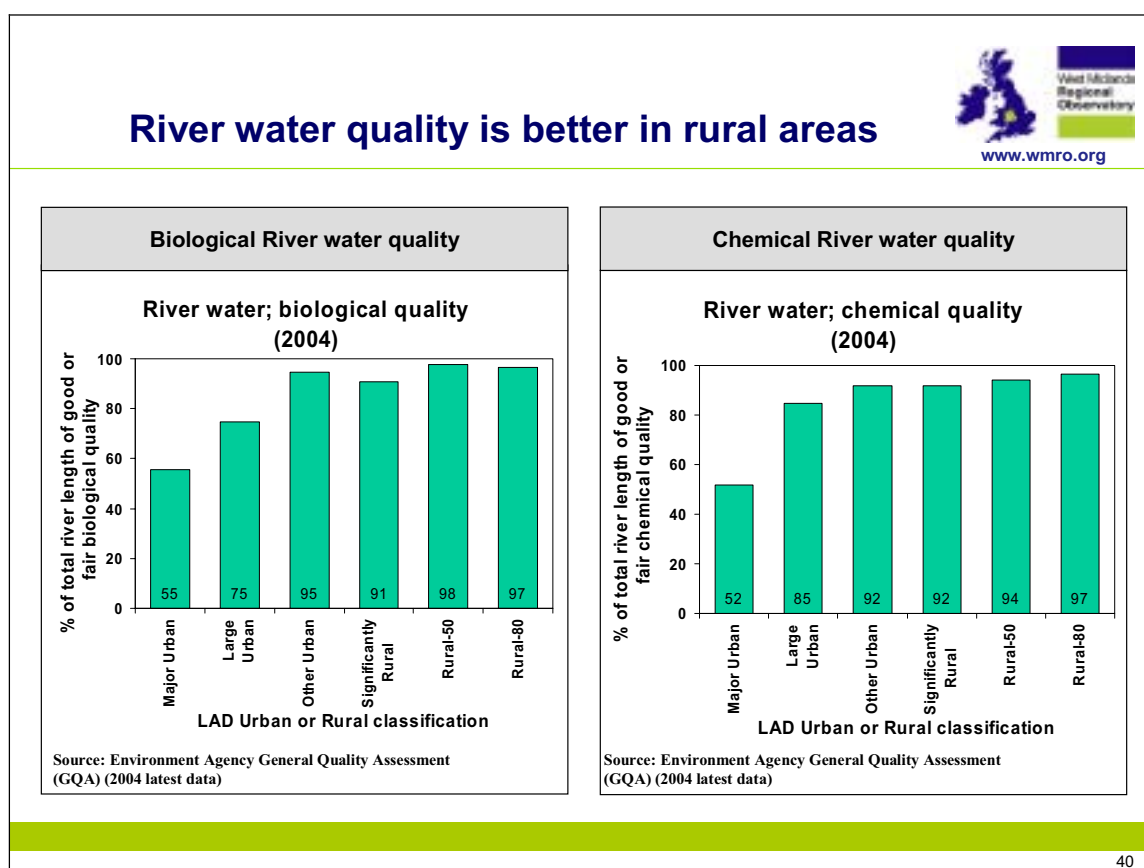
Some of the highest levels of fly tipping and abandoned vehicles, important issues influencing neighbourhood satisfaction levels, are in urban areas, but the pattern is not simple, with large variations across Local Authorities in the same classification. These variations are an indicator of stress, and with litter reported as one of the top factors influencing people’s decisions about where to live, we would expect to see decreasing levels of fly tipping associated with urban renaissance.

Despite continued efforts to improve river water quality, a high percentage of urban river length is still in poor or bad biological and chemical quality, with major urban areas coming out worst overall. This is an indication that some parts of the natural environment are not improving in urban areas in line with targets. Urban water quality could therefore have negative impacts on people’s perceptions of urban areas and could influence their choice of location since a ‘nice, clean environment’ is one of the top factors people look for when choosing where to live. This is particularly important when we compare urban areas to rural areas, as we find that biological and chemical water quality is good or fair in over 90% of river length.

Another important area which can significantly impact on quality of life and desirability of an area is risk of flooding. Historically many floodplains have been reclaimed and developed. The number of planning applications approved contrary

to Environment Agency advice on flood risk is therefore important. This is only available at a regional level, and does not differentiate between business and residential uses, which makes this of limited use, however there is a downward trend which is a positive sign.

Poor air quality is often associated with reduced quality of life and increased health risks. There is little data available sub-regionally, but air quality management areas (AQMA) have been declared in 16 local authorities in the Region and are not restricted to urban areas. The main reason for failure of standards and therefore declaration of an AQMA is Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) from traffic, which relates to the increasing volume of road traffic and congestion levels.



3.1.9 Culture

There is currently much being done to map the culture data that exists in the region to help identify the gaps for future research to fill. Much of the data available relates to number of visits, and is not suitable for inclusion as an indicator for this piece of work. Suitable indicators to consider for the future might relate to Market Town viability, attitudes and perceptions surrounding events, festivals and services, and distance to facilities.

4 Cross-cutting Issues

The final chapter of our report attempts to synthesise the messages drawn from the data and associated analysis and interpretation in the preceding chapters, essentially to answer a number of fundamental questions, these being:

- € What assessment can we make of the current position and progress in relation to the Urban Renaissance and Rural Renaissance policy goals?
- € How much of our understanding remains uncertain, and what do we need to know to bridge this gap – in other words, what are the data and intelligence gaps we need to fill most urgently?
- € Which are the indicators which appear to be most revealing in understanding progress on these two policy issues?

4.1 The Regional Position on Urban Renaissance

The data around learning and skills indicates the contradictory nature of the evidence we have in relation to understanding Urban Renaissance. Clearly we have a historic position both of lower educational out-turns for school leavers in our major urban areas, and also historically lower levels of qualifications in the workforce than pertain elsewhere in the Region, and nationally. These positions, like the historically higher levels of unemployment in the MUAs, reflect positions which highlight the challenge of Urban Renaissance. At the same time, there are positive trends – though from a lower base, GCSE attainment appears to be rising more quickly in the MUAs, but they are offset by other trends which indicate the scale of challenge for Urban Renaissance.

In this regard, we should note that unemployment, though falling everywhere, has fallen much more slowly in the Birmingham and Black Country conurbation than anywhere else, whilst neither levels of participation in structured learning amongst young people, nor the number of young people classified as NEETs (not in education, employment or training), show any recent evidence of improvement over time. Nevertheless, the gross change in the numbers of people unemployed in the conurbations shows significant falls, even if modest in percentage terms, and this does suggest that some progress is being made in addressing historic high levels of unemployment in these areas.

Local variations further complicate our assessment. Some parts of the MUAs in the Region clearly show problems which are persistent, worse than neighbouring areas, and show little sign of positive movement. In contrast other parts of the MUAs show much more positive positions. We do not yet fully understand the factors which contribute to this variation, though we can suggest some potential issues, and highlight this as an area for potential further scrutiny. In terms of educational attainment, Tamworth (outside the MUA) and Sandwell (part of the MUA) show far lower levels of good GCSE passes than neighbouring areas, and both Sandwell and Stoke show particularly high levels of people in the workforce without qualification – but other parts of the MUA, Solihull and Dudley are comparatively low. Undoubtedly relative deprivation plays some part in these variations, and it is clear that more affluent parts of the urban areas of the Region are quite capable of sustaining higher levels of educational attainment, whilst lower attainment frequently pertains in more deprived areas.

Other issues, some of them politically very sensitive, will also play a part, since relative deprivation cannot explain all local variations – and hence current and historic attitudes to education and skills amongst parts of the population, and the relative effectiveness of policy makers, institutions and elected authorities are all likely to play a part. Localised cultural attitudes are likely to play a part too in wide variations in rates of self employment and entrepreneurship, and these will have derived from historic patterns of employment which have shaped a broad range of attitudes relating to work and skills which will take time and concerted effort to change.

There appears too to be clear evidence of the continued suburbanisation of business activity, since whilst business stocks are increasing overall, they are falling in the Birmingham / Black Country conurbation, whilst rising in other urban parts of the Region and in more accessible rural areas. This is clearly counter to the pattern we would wish to see for Urban Renaissance. Similarly, there is an established and continuing pattern of out-migration from the MUAs, and a clear aspiration amongst many urban residents established through the Regional Lifestyle Survey to live in rural areas. There is just the slightest suggestion in the latest figures that out-migration from the West Midlands conurbation may be slowing, but it will take a longer trend to confirm this. Urban parts of the Region are also attracting younger people, and if Urban Renaissance is to take hold, there will be a need to turn what appears at present to be a generational effect (since as the population grows older, it tends to move out from the urban areas) into a cohort effect – such that the generation in their twenties now and attracted into urban areas will find key issues of quality of life, housing supply and amenities to be moving sufficiently in the right direction for them to be able to stay on in the cities as they grow older and raise families.

Urban quality of life is the net result of a whole series of issues, which fall into three broad categories – those which can be measured directly (for example levels

of crime), those which can be measured by representing qualitative issues (opinions and attitudes) in some quantifiable form (for example questions examining attitudes used in the Regional Lifestyle Survey, which in the main part originated in the Audit Commission's Quality of Life indicator set), and others at present difficult to quantify in any objective sense (such as, for example, an understanding of the quality of the urban built environment). The latter group of issues is the most difficult to measure.

We know that of those issues which impact most strongly on choices of residential location, the most important is community safety, and of crime and disorder issues, the most significant issue which is recorded as a crime is burglary (Regional Lifestyle Survey). Whilst we need to be cautious about linking perception to incidence (since burglary is anomalous in that perception of risk is not related to the real level of risk), the relative speed of decline in burglary rates in MUAs is precisely the sort of positive indicator that we would expect to see in support of the wider goals of Urban Renaissance – whilst rates are still higher in the MUAs, the trend at present is clearly to close the gap substantially on other parts of the Region. Nevertheless, the scale of the task to be tackled is evident in the far more sceptical views of urban residents about whether residents feel their neighbourhood has improved, and the lower levels of civic engagement evinced by voluntary activity in urban areas. Crucially, however, neither of these are time series measures, so we cannot judge whether these positions represent improvement.

Health too is a clear quality of life measure, and though there are mixed messages from the data, there are clear positive signs, with male life expectancy rising steadily in most parts of the MUAs (with the possible exception of Stoke) – though life expectancy is still significantly lower in urban areas, and female life expectancy in urban areas does not appear to be rising as fast as in rural areas. Likewise the mortality from key diseases such as circulatory disease also shows steady improvement in urban areas. All this points to improving health in urban areas, though we must be somewhat cautious, since the latest health publications in the Region highlight the degree of variation at a local level, and the impact of deprivation in suppressing life expectancy in the poorest wards.

In terms of the trend in relation to Urban Renaissance, transport data is not yet sufficiently discriminating to provide clear signals. Reduced urban trunk road speeds provide an ambiguous message which may or may not support Urban Renaissance, and we identified in the first chapter of this report that in the initial phase, congestion might increase before the transport network, and the transport and locational choices of individuals and organisations changed to adapt in ways which would support Urban Renaissance. What we do know is that vehicle mileages have been increasing over many years (Figure 26, State of the Region Report 2004), and whilst the regional vehicle fleet appears to be becoming more fuel efficient, increased mileage and congestion may be more than offsetting this technological improvement. Moreover increased vehicle movements on urban roads has the

secondary impact of reducing tranquillity, another key quality of life measure. It is important to understand the impact of the apparent longer journey times (but not lengths, journeys are simply slower) for residents in the Birmingham / Black Country conurbation – this may be contributory to persuading residents to move out of the conurbation, rather than persuading them to reconsider their mode of travel.

Finally, for environmental measures, there is little conclusive evidence of trends for Urban Renaissance, though we do have baselines for measures such as green space and water quality, on which we can build a trend in future years. It is clear however that on these measures, our urban areas are some way behind the more rural areas of the Region. There is no measure of the quality of the built environment available, and this would be valuable, since anecdotally, much progress is being made in many of our urban centres in redeveloping the provision of, and the demand for urban living, particularly close to and in our city and town centres – with these developments often anchored with significant arts or cultural developments.

Overall, the conclusion must be that at present, many of the long run problems such as out-migration, low educational attainment, higher levels of deprivation and lower quality of life, persist in our urban areas. These are precisely the issues on which we would hope to see positive developments if we were to conclude that Urban Renaissance was taking hold. On many measures there appears to be little evidence of change yet, but this is what we might expect given the long run nature of the impacts of policy expected, and the early phase of policy implementation that we are currently in. There are however some suggestions of positive change – a possible tipping point on net out-migration, clear signs of improvements on educational attainment, and positive news on one of the most significant categories of crime, burglary. Urban renaissance has not yet hit its stride, and many more indicators need to point clearly towards it before we can be sure that we are moving in the right direction – but there are some clear green shoots of recovery.

4.2 The Regional Position on Rural Renaissance

Just as education and skills data is ambivalent in relation to our regional progress on Urban Renaissance, so also it delivers mixed messages in relation to Rural Renaissance. Overall, attainment at GCSE level is higher in rural areas, but dependent on the precise definitions of urban and rural which are used, different patterns emerge. Where geographical attribution is finer grained and based on very small areas, there is clearly a peak in attainment for the most accessible rural areas where a positive impact is felt from the out-migration of relatively affluent, well-educated families with well-motivated children – but attainment then tails off in the more remote parts of the Region. In contrast, a classification based on LAD boundaries shows the best attainment in the most rural areas. The overall conclusion must be that whilst country and market towns are doing relatively well,

the problem of poor attainment is concentrated in remoter rural areas away from towns. In terms of overall workforce qualification levels, rural areas of the Region appear well placed, though this data is not available at as fine a scale as GCSE attainment and this may mask local issues.

Trends in levels of participation in structured learning, which are rising ahead of the national average in the rural parts of the Region, and falling levels of NEETs (the group of young people falling out of any structured contact with education or the labour market) both appear to support the aims of Rural Renaissance, which would see increasing qualification levels in rural areas. However both these trends could be being masked both by the level of geography at which the data is available, and the positive impact on these measures of net out-migration, so it is necessary to be cautious. Nevertheless the trends in rural areas on both of these measures are more encouraging than in urban parts of the Region.

As was identified in WMRO's State of the Region Update Report 2005, levels of self-employment in rural areas are higher than in urban areas, and are highest in the most remote rural areas. This does indicate one clear difference between the economies of urban and rural areas in the Region, and levels of self-employment are often used as a proxy for levels of entrepreneurship. However in rural areas, the driver for higher levels of self-employment could be entrepreneurialism (driven, as several studies have identified, by well-educated, entrepreneurial out-migrants bringing new ideas and capital into rural areas), or necessity, given fewer choices and opportunities in the labour markets of remoter rural areas, or by a culture of self-employment related to practices in agriculture and related industries, and their wider impact on the working culture of rural areas. The lack of sub-regional information on attitudes to entrepreneurship means it is difficult to piece together what is happening in rural areas.

Business densities (the number of businesses per 10,000 of the working age population) are higher in rural areas, but it is notable that whilst densities are rising in urban and most rural areas, they are not rising in the most remote rural areas – hinting that in these areas, the sort of economic development that would support rural renaissance may not be happening to the extent we would wish. The issue would appear to be higher rates of business 'churn' and failure in the most remote rural areas, since rates of new registrations are at their highest in the most rural areas, and like the rest of the Region, have been rising. The presence of high concentrations of R&D activity in rural areas is intriguing – since these are high value added companies and jobs this seems to point positively to rural renaissance in economic terms, though there is a risk that if these are high value added jobs migrating from urban locations, they will exacerbate the tendency for out-migration.

Unemployment is relatively low and falling fastest in rural areas in the Region, though there remain hotspots in some of the country and market towns which we

would expect to diminish if rural renaissance took a firmer hold. Despite this, in the most rural areas, there are increasing numbers of claimants for incapacity benefit and severe disablement allowance, and the former has been associated with withdrawal from the labour market of those who have been discouraged from job-seeking. Again, the evidence on rural renaissance appears ambiguous, and does point to particular and continuing problems in the most rural parts of the Region.

Present data suggests that out-migration from urban to rural areas continues, with particular pressure on parts of South Warwickshire (which are also subject to net in-migration from areas outside the Region – and this is primarily from London and the South-East, further exacerbating pressures on house prices and affordability in some parts of the Region) as well as parts of south-east and mid-Staffordshire. The apparent turning point in net migration from the former West Midlands metropolitan conurbation to the rest of the Region has the potential to be as supportive of rural renaissance goals as urban renaissance – but the same caveat applies in the context of rural renaissance, that it is too early to be sure whether this is a trend beginning, or merely one year slightly out of trend. The aspiration of many urban dwellers to live in rural areas, particularly accessible rural areas remains a concern in the context of achieving rural renaissance. It reminds policy makers that the fundamental driver of out-migration is the aspiration of many people to live in rural areas, and it is in changing these aspirations that holds the solution to achieving both urban and rural renaissance. Meanwhile migration continues to contribute to the older age profile of rural areas, again not contributing to the aims of Rural Renaissance, where a more balanced population age structure would be preferable.

As suggested earlier, there are real problems of housing affordability in some rural parts of the Region, notably South Shropshire, Herefordshire and Stratford districts. It is important to stress that these problems are not present in all rural districts, and affordability problems are shared by some urban areas as well, notably Solihull. Since reducing the problems caused by housing affordability in rural areas is clearly an aim of regional policy in relation to Rural Renaissance, the persistence of affordability problems does not support progress against the aims of the policy. Moreover, this underlines the interdependence of success in urban and rural renaissance – if rural renaissance policy achieves reductions in house building in rural areas without urban renaissance delivering reduced demands for rural living, then the net effect may be even greater inflationary pressure on rural house prices.

Whilst journeys to work in rural areas are longer in terms of distance than in urban areas, this only translates into much longer journey times for a minority, with arguably slightly shorter average journey times for rural residents than for some of the most urban areas. Rural areas remain much more dependent on cars for journeys to work, though the reasons for this are likely to be complex, and to result from more than mere issues of distance – affluence and lifestyle choices will also be involved in the decisions of individuals about where they live and work, and consequently the mode of transport they rely on for journeys between the two.

There is little evidence yet of the increased availability of alternative transport choices and hence reduced dependence on cars in rural areas which would signal rural renaissance, nor the reductions in rural vehicle mileages which would result from different decisions taken by individuals about where to work and live, and how to travel between the two. Policy decisions relating to road charging, and the differentials in rates between urban and rural areas, may also have some effect upon the movement and links between urban and rural areas in the Region.

As we have already indicated in the context of urban renaissance, the attitudes of individuals, in particular in relation to their lifestyles and aspirations, are important. There is clear evidence that the aspiration of many urban residents to live in a rural area far exceeds the capacity of rural areas to absorb, and runs counter to regional policy at a fundamental level. Since it is not reasonable to stem this aspiration, and the resultant flow of out migrants, by making rural areas less attractive or accessible as places to live, it is clear that the success of rural renaissance in this regard is crucially dependent upon the effectiveness of urban renaissance policy in making urban areas more attractive as places to live and work, and hence reducing over time the proportion of urban residents with aspirations to live in rural areas.

Clearly much of our evidence underlines that the quality of life offered by rural areas is fundamental to both to their attractiveness and to rural renaissance. Rural areas have for example, much greater proportions of green space and other indicators of higher environmental quality, such as better quality river water. At the same time it is this very quality of life, and the perception of it, which continues to attract those who can afford to choose to do so to go and live in the Region's rural areas. Hence in policy terms, improvements in rural quality of life, though unambiguously desirable, may prove to be a double edged sword. The discussion concerning urban renaissance made much of the importance of declining crime levels in urban areas, and it is notable that in the remoter rural parts of the Region, levels of crime are the lowest of any part of the West Midlands. However in the part of the Region designated 'Significantly Rural' – comprising a group of nine districts in more accessible rural areas – levels of burglary are currently only a little below those in major urban areas, and higher than in other urban areas.

Residents of rural areas are clearly less likely to think that their neighbourhood is getting worse than their urban counterparts, though they are less likely to identify positive change as well. Remote rural areas are most likely to exhibit a strong sense of being able to impact on the state of their locality, and it is also rural areas, and particularly the more remote parts of the Region, that show the greatest levels of voluntary activity. All these indicators are supportive of rural renaissance, though longer term trends indicating positive change would be required to be unequivocal.

At the present stage there is little in our data on health on which to draw clear conclusions about rural renaissance and health, though it is clear that mortality rates in rural area are generally lower than in urban areas and are continuing to fall.

There is evidence of change relating to service accessibility, and there is some analysis of this data which does point to reducing service accessibility in rural areas – for post offices in the more accessible rural areas (a pattern which shows some evidence of being duplicated for GP surgeries also), and for supermarkets in the more remote rural areas. In both cases this appears to run counter to the aims of rural renaissance, which envisages thriving rural economies with improving service accessibility.

As with urban renaissance, therefore, the evidence pertaining to the regional position on rural renaissance is mixed, and as might be expected early on in the policy cycle. Moreover the picture varies between accessible and remoter rural areas, where the stories are often very different, and is further complicated because there are many areas – for example quality of life – where progress in rural areas is unequivocally desirable, but where improvement may further fuel the pressures brought through migration.

Indicators suggested trends counter to rural renaissance include the continued trend of outward migration, car dependence, difficulties with housing affordability, and aspirations for urban living amongst the Region's urban residents. On skills the messages are more supportive of rural renaissance, although this appears to be a continued problem in remoter rural areas, and other labour market indicators are ambiguous, perhaps even contradictory. The most positive markers for rural areas concern quality of life and environment, though even these may prove to be a mixed blessing. Overall, therefore, there is only modest evidence of rural renaissance apparent, and the majority of the data indicates the persistence of the problems which the policy was established to address.

4.3 Key Data and Intelligence Gaps in Understanding Urban and Rural Renaissance

There are a number of key data and intelligence gaps which are apparent from the process of this study, and addressing these will be critical to a fuller understanding of the progress of urban and rural renaissance policy. These are broadly as follows:

- € Entrepreneurship – identified as a particular area of interest for rural renaissance but also of importance for urban renaissance, there is a significant gap in the supply of data at sub-regional level, particularly in relation to entrepreneurial activity and attitudes towards entrepreneurship;
- € The establishment of longer run time series data on key areas of qualification and skills at a local level will help the understanding of progress against urban and rural renaissance goals – in particular some key data sets are not available at LAD level, which hampers true urban-rural analysis;

- € The Regional Lifestyle Survey provides key data on a number of issues relating to both urban and rural renaissance, particularly on residential preference and aspiration, and quality of life issues. The survey needs repeating if we are to see what trends are emerging over time, and whether on some of these key indicators, the desired outcomes of urban and rural renaissance are being delivered;
- € Longer time series runs of data *on the same basis* for key benefits data will be important in determining the extent of change over time;
- € The creation of a robust, consistent and detailed model of regional population change (a regional population modelling tool building on local information), providing greater local sensitivity and detail than figures provided nationally, would help support monitoring and planning of urban and rural renaissance;
- € There is insufficient evidence as yet to understand the links between road speed, congestion, policy interventions to curb speed, and the impact of congestion on traffic speeds, journey times and traffic volumes. We need to understand more clearly the feedback effects of journey times and congestion levels on decisions on where to live and work, and how, and how much to travel;
- € There are only limited indicators on environmental quality, particularly the quality of the urban built environment, where there is no quantitative evidence;
- € Much of the data available on health in the Region is not presently available at a level which will allow urban-rural comparison – though the source data would support such an analysis;
- € There is very little data available regionally to quantify the impact of culture and cultural assets on urban and rural renaissance, though they are understood in policy terms to be key contributors. Quantitative measures need to be developed which measure the economic (instrumental) and wider (intrinsic) benefits of investment and activity in culture and cultural assets;
- € There is only limited understanding of the importance and nature of engagement in civic society, and its role in fostering urban and rural renaissance. Clearer quantitative measures are required.

4.4 Key Indicators to Watch

A number of indicators are both robust enough, and indicative enough of change to recommend as of particular value in the contextual monitoring of urban and rural renaissance. We would suggest particular attention to the following:

- € GCSE outcomes over time;
- € Proportions of the workforce without qualifications, participation rates in structured learning, levels of NEETs, assuming data can be refined to deliver robust urban-rural comparison;
- € Proportion of working age population in self-employment;
- € Levels of JSA claims, levels of incapacity benefit claims;
- € Net migration into or out of the former West Midlands metropolitan area from the rest of the Region, and similar figures for Stoke on Trent, as a trend over time;
- € Aspirations about where to live, and key issues in choosing where to live, journey to work times and distances, providing the RLS is repeated on a similar basis to the 2005 survey;
- € Housing affordability index as a trend over time;
- € Trend rates of burglary and violent crime;
- € Life expectancy over time, providing data can be re-addressed to proper urban-rural classifications;
- € Percentage of total land area classified as green space.

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