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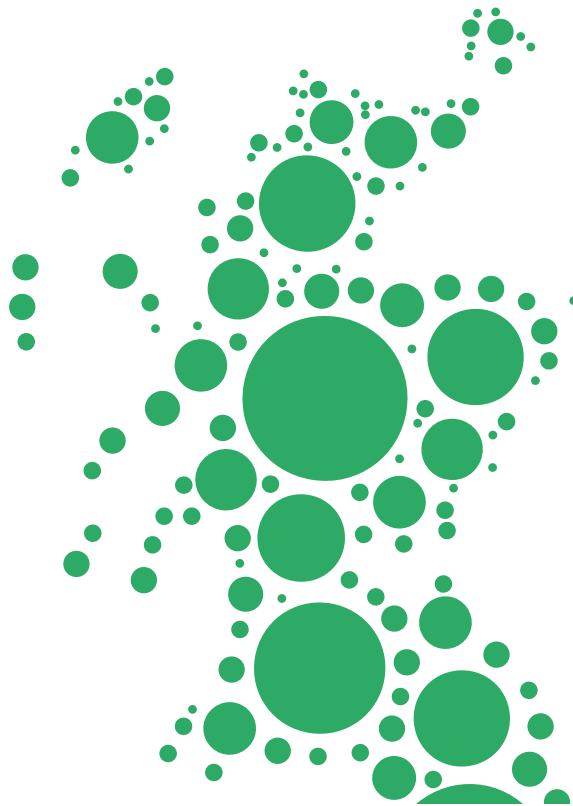
RuralCovidLife Survey General Report

Health and wellbeing of rural communities in Scotland

January 2021

generation scotland

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

wellcome

# RuralCovidLife Survey: Summary Report 11/01/2021

Aims of the survey

RuralCovidLife is an online survey about coronavirus (COVID-19). It's been created to understand how COVID-19 measures have affected the health and wellbeing of people living in rural Scottish communities. The questions have been designed by, and for, people from rural communities. We hope these findings will provide a voice for rural communities and influence policy on how they are supported in the future. The survey ran from 14th October to 30th November 2020.

Participants

By 30th November, 3,080 participants had completed the survey, ranging in age from 16-96 years. More female (70%), than male, participants (29%) completed the survey.

Ages of RuralCovidLife Volunteers

■ 18 to 29 ■ 30s ■ 40s ■ 50s ■ 60s ■ 70s ■ 80+
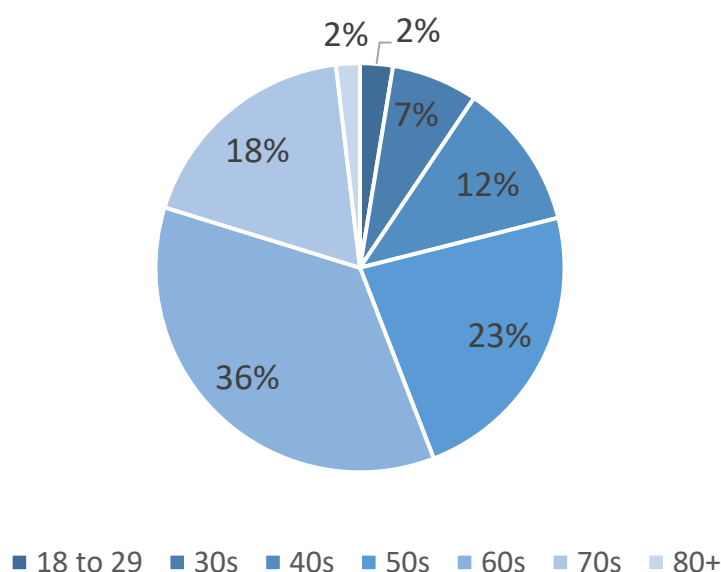
Participants from 29 local authority areas across Scotland took part in the survey (Table 1.). Based on the Scottish Government 6 Fold Urban-Rural Classification (www2.gov.scot/resource/0039/00399487.pdf), 67% of participants lived in 'accessible rural' locations and 33% lived in 'remote rural' locations.10% of participants lived on one of the Scottish islands.
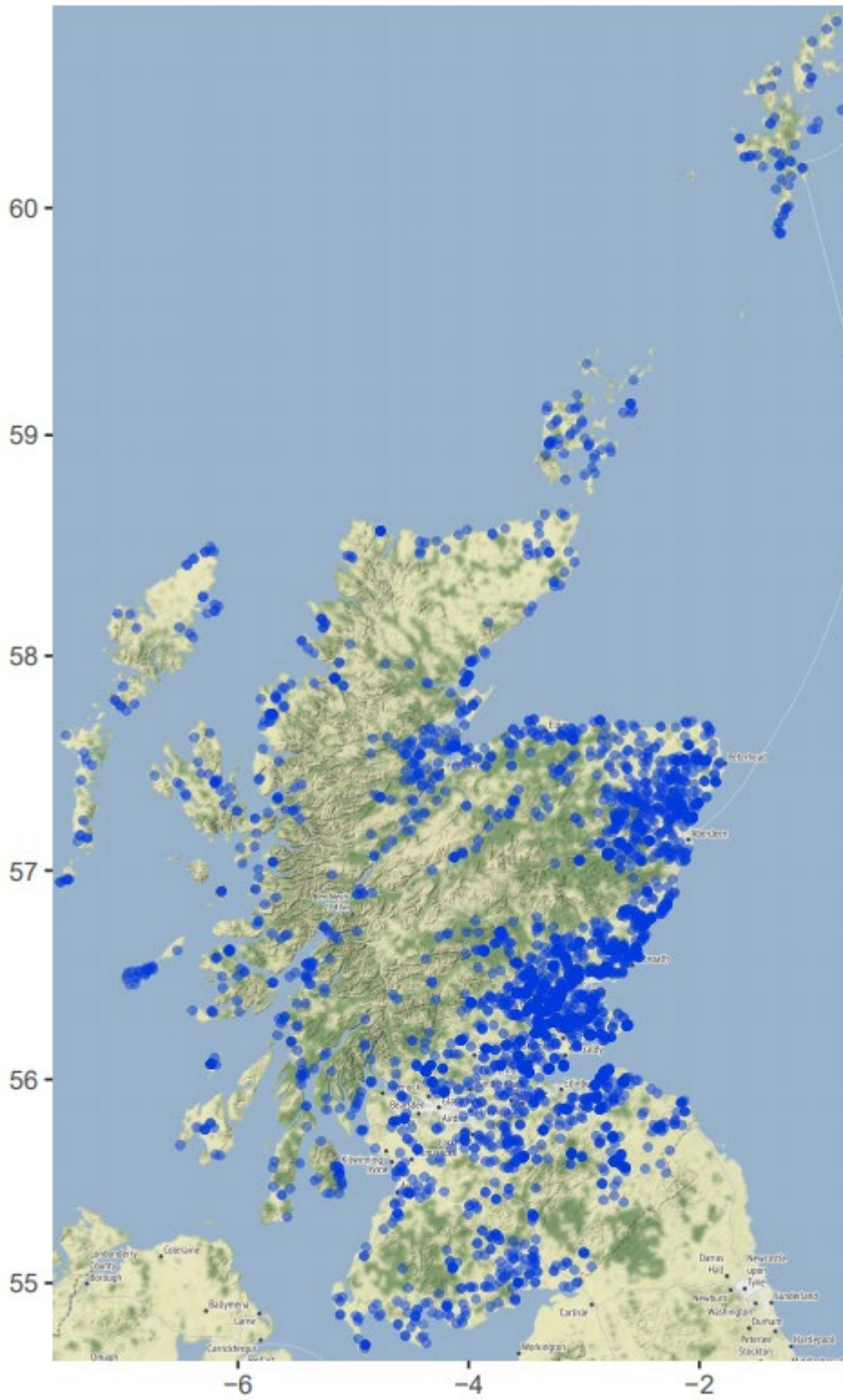
Particpant map

Table 1. Responses by local authority area

| Local Authority	Number of respondents
Aberdeen City	14
Aberdeenshire	516
Angus	274
Argyll and Bute	145
City of Edinburgh	7
Clackmannanshire	16
Dumfries and Galloway	176
Dundee City	4
East Ayrshire	21
East Dunbartonshire	17
East Lothian	94
East Renfrewshire	3
Falkirk	11
Fife	322
Highland	334
Midlothian	31
Moray	79
Na h-Eileanan Siar	53
North Ayrshire	26
North Lanarkshire	17
Orkney Islands	51
Perth and Kinross	483
Renfrewshire	15
Scottish Borders	126
Shetland Islands	56
South Ayrshire	28
South Lanarkshire	79
Stirling	57
West Lothian	28

Key Findings

Feelings and coping

We asked participants questions about how they were feeling. Of those that responded on loneliness, 8% reported feeling lonely 'most of the time' or 'all or some of the time', 30% reported feeling lonely 'some of the time', and 62% said they felt lonely 'none or almost none of the time'. Younger participants and female participants reported higher levels of loneliness, with slightly higher levels also seen in those living in remote rural locations. 12% of participants reported feeling down,

depressed or hopeless, and 14% reported feeling nervous, anxious or on edge more than half the time, or nearly every day, during the past two weeks.
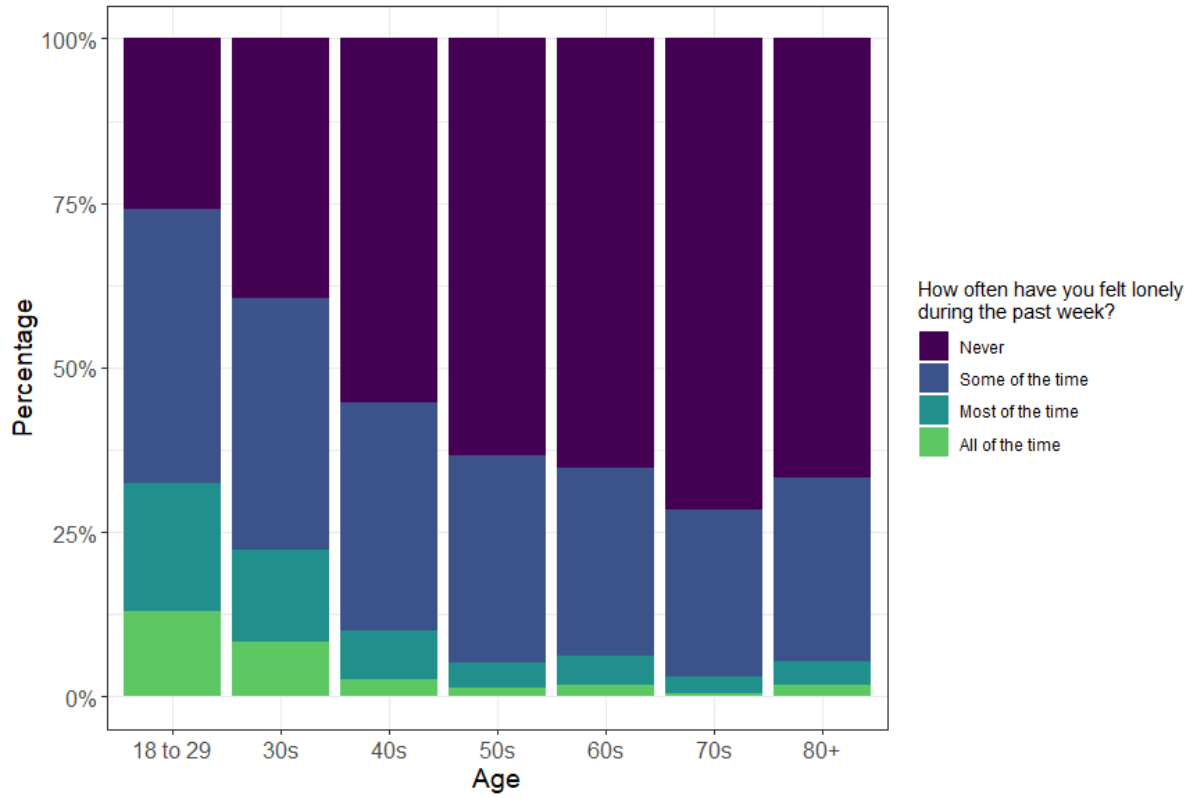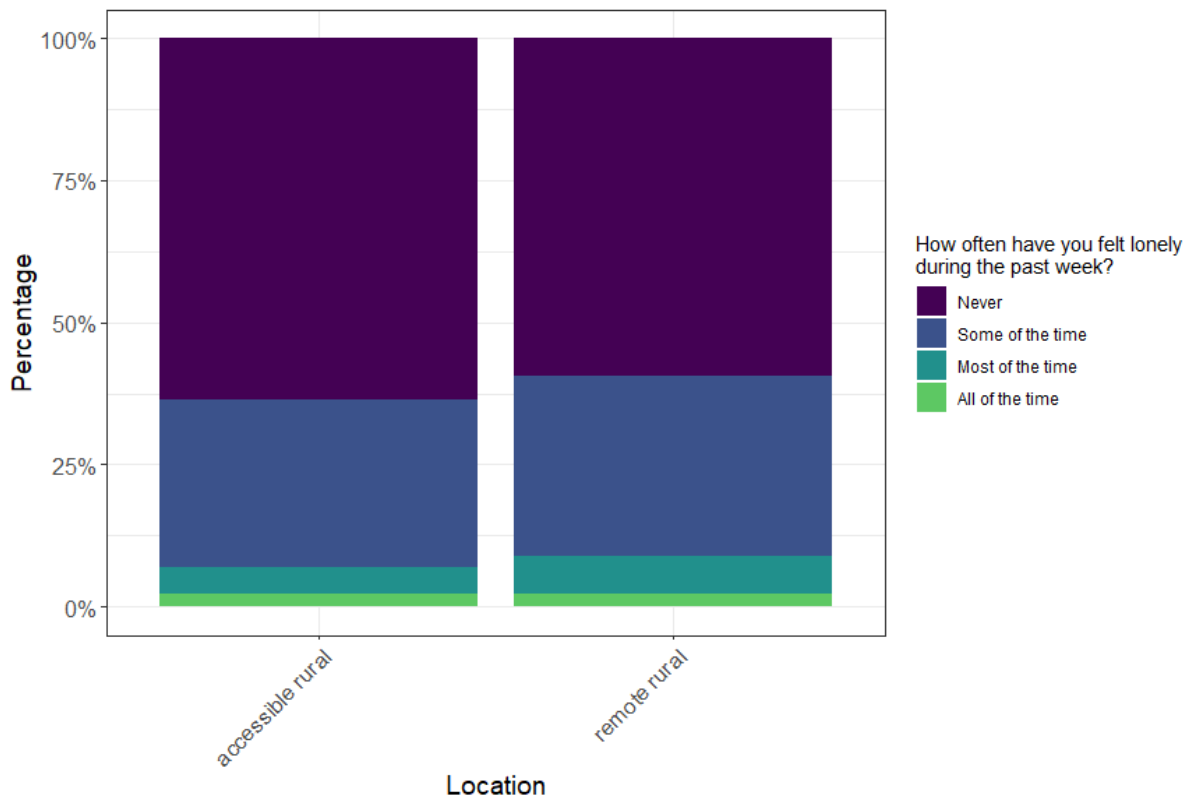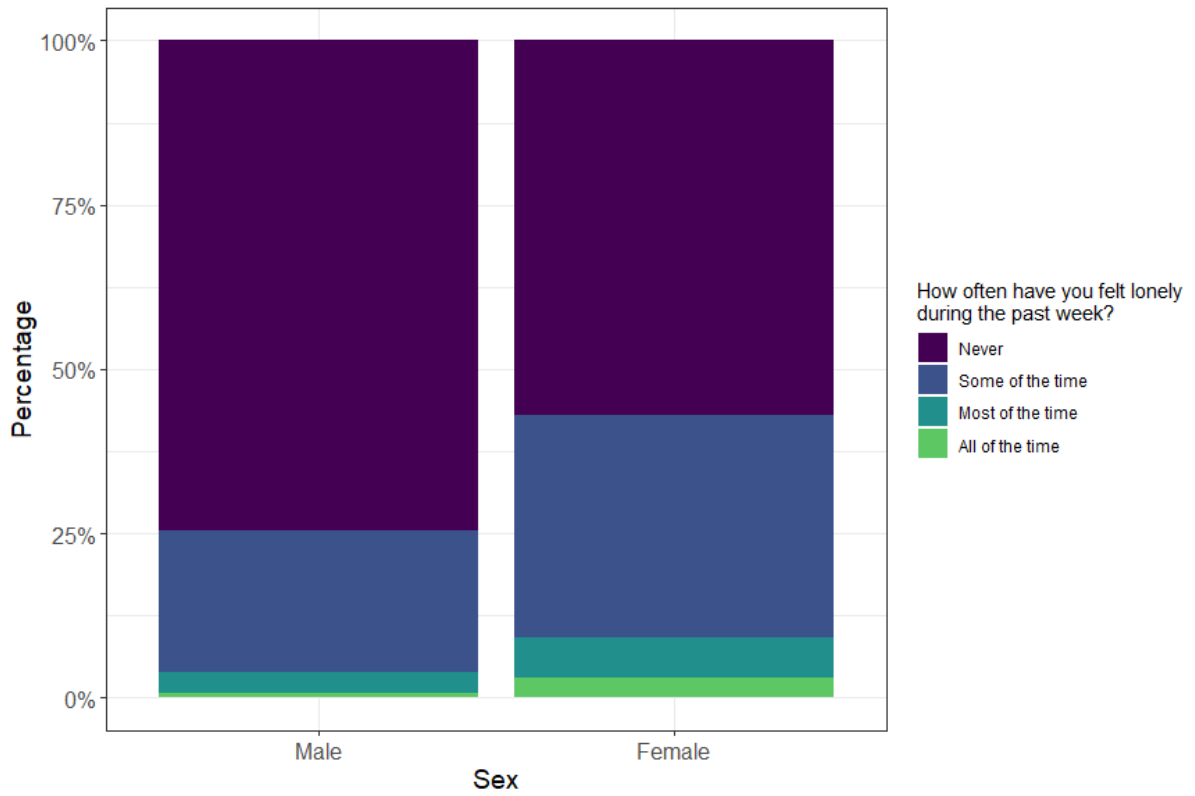
Connectivity

We asked participants about their access to the internet and how easily they can access it. 19% of participants reported that their current broadband connection was either 'poor' or 'very poor'. Unsurprisingly, those in remote rural locations reported having the poorest internet connectivity. 67% of participants said reliable high-speed broadband was very important for keeping in touch with friends and family. Of those in employment, 87% said high-speed broadband was very important to be able to work from home.
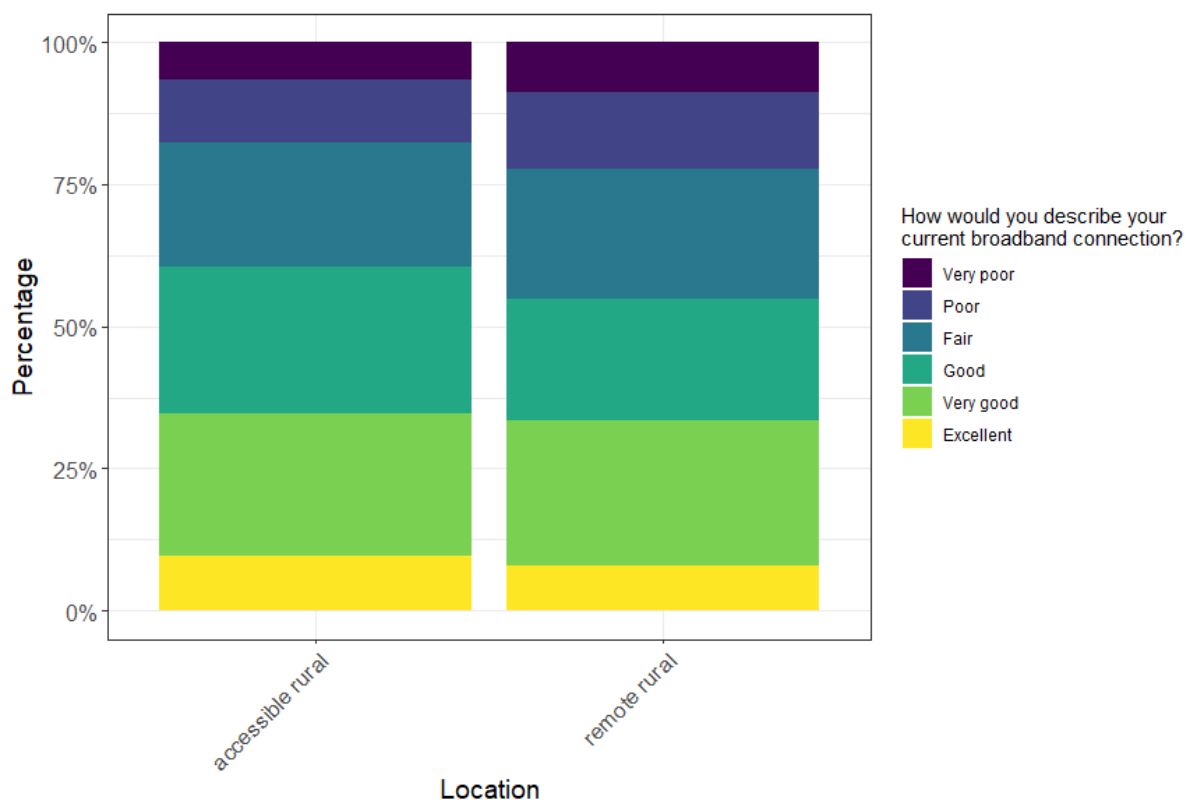
Transport

We asked how often participants used public transport before the COVID-19 measures were introduced, and how often they were using it now. Those reporting they never used public transport rose from 25% before the COVID-19 measures were introduced to 76% at the time of the survey. This was remarkably consistent across both categories of rural living
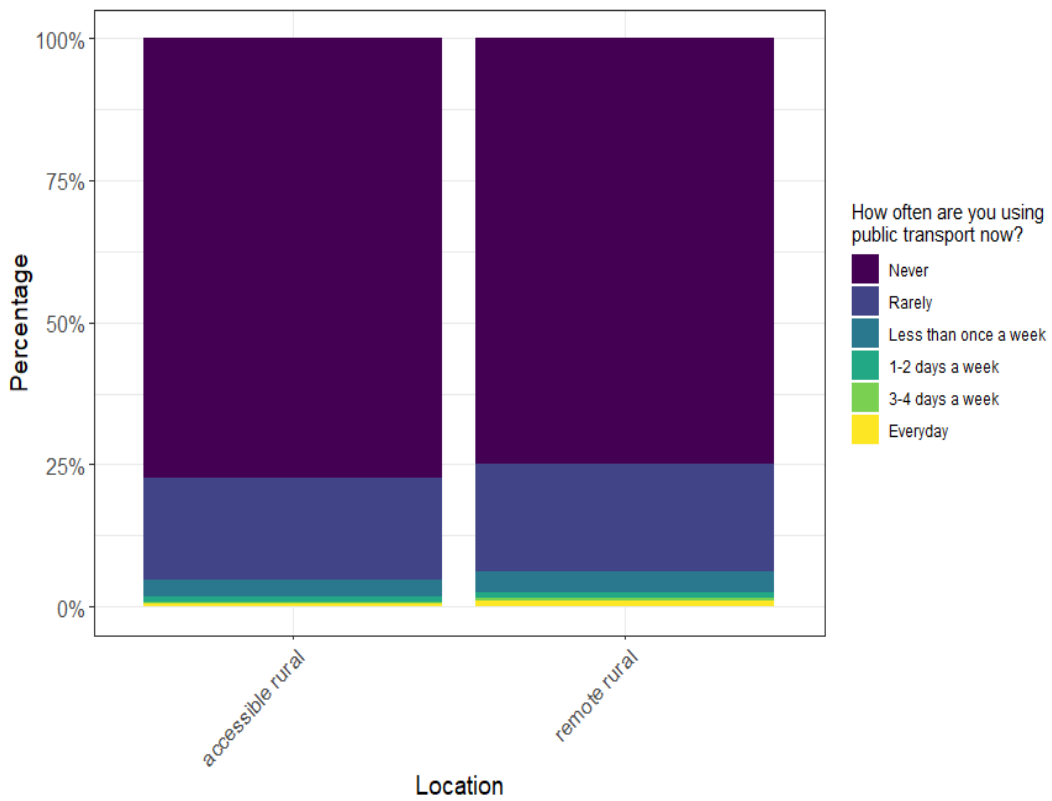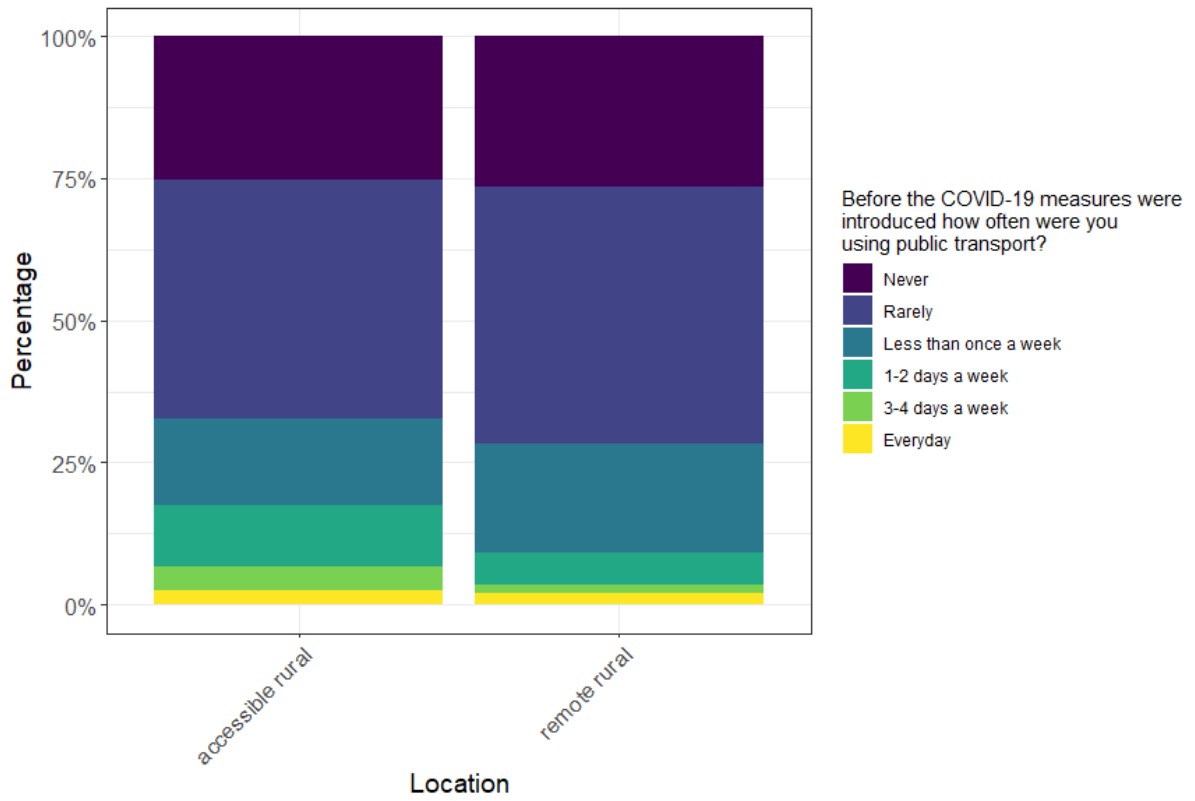
Employment

Of those in employment, 15% of participants reported that their employment status had changed since the COVID-19 measures were introduced in March 2020. 18% of participants reported they had been furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and 24% of participants reported feeling worried about their job security.

Community

We asked participants how COVID-19 measures had affected various aspects of community life (Table 2.)

Table 2. COVID-19 impact on rural communities

Outcome	Things are not as good (%)	Things are about the same (%)	Things are even better (%)	Don't know/NA (%)
Strong sense of community	13.0	50.4	27.8	8.8
Shopping locally	18.1	47.6	30.7	3.6
Community organisations, businesses, the NHS and others all working together	25.0	37.8	19.9	17.3
Pollution levels	3.8	38.7	41.8	15.7
Funding being available for communities	14.4	24.2	10.4	51.0
Government and Local Authorities listening to communities	22.9	34.0	4.9	38.2
Roads being quieter and safer for active travel (walking, cycling)	9.7	47.3	38.5	4.4
Being able to access green space	5.9	75.4	12.5	6.3

Other

We offered participants the chance to raise any topics they wished we had asked about, but had not. The key issues were remarkably consistent across all rural settings. The word cloud below highlights the most common issues and concerns. We will explore these through our rural community network and further surveys.