

PARENT FACT SHEET - RESIDENTIAL ASPIRATIONS

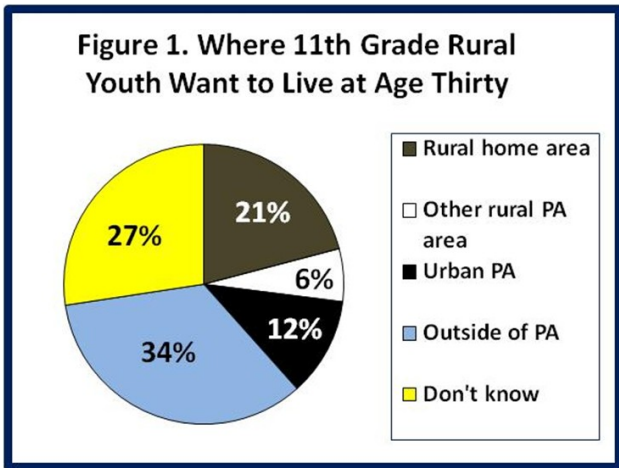
Spring 2010

Stay or Go? Where Do Rural Pennsylvania Students Want to Live as Adults?

Throughout middle-school and high school youth consider what jobs they want as adults and how much schooling they need. An equally important topic that receives much less attention, is where do rural youth want to live as adults? In some cases, the assumption is made that rural youth must move away to achieve school and career goals and not return to their home community. In other cases, rural youth balance their desire to stay in the community against the educational and occupational opportunities that are available there. This fact sheet describes the residential aspirations of the 1,057 rural youth who took part in Wave 3 of the Rural Youth Education (RYE) Study. These students were in 11th grade in eleven rural school districts in Pennsylvania during the 2008-2009 school year.

Residential Aspirations

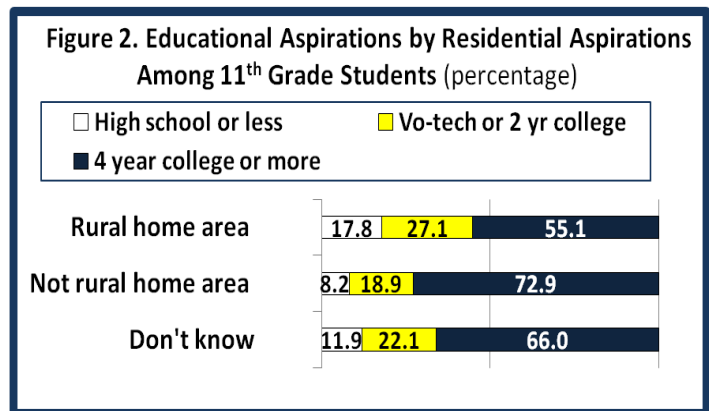
- ◆ 21% of the 11th grade students in the study want to live in their rural home area when they are thirty years old.
- ◆ Just over half want to live somewhere else.
- ◆ 27% of the 11th grade students are not sure where they want to live at age thirty.



When asked where they wanted to live at age thirty, 21% of RYE students said they wanted to live in the rural area in which they currently lived (their rural home area) (Figure 1). Six percent wanted to live in another rural Pennsylvania area, while 12% chose urban Pennsylvania. The largest share (34%) wanted to live outside of Pennsylvania at age 30. The second most common answer was that they didn't know yet (27%). Many rural communities are hard-hit when their youth move away, so a more simple comparison is those who want to stay in their rural home area compared to those who want to live elsewhere, and those who don't know. Just over half (52%) of the 11th grade students indicated they wanted to live somewhere other than their rural home area at age 30.

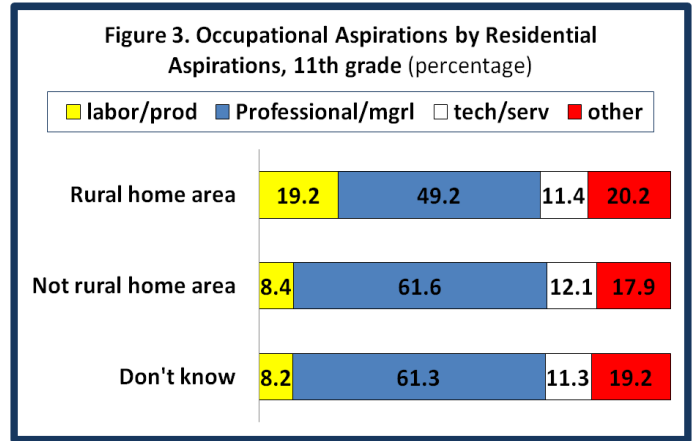
Do Educational Goals Vary by Residential Plans?

Prior studies suggest that youth who want to stay in rural areas may modify their occupational and educational plans to fit the jobs in rural areas. Comparing educational aspirations, 55.1% of youth who want to stay in their rural home areas want four years of college or more (See Figure 2). While 72.9% of youth who want to live elsewhere aspire to a four-year college education or more. Youth who want to stay in their rural home area are almost twice as likely to want high school or less (17.8%) compared to the 8.2% of those wanting to live elsewhere who want high school education or less.



Do Occupational Goals Vary with Residential Plans?

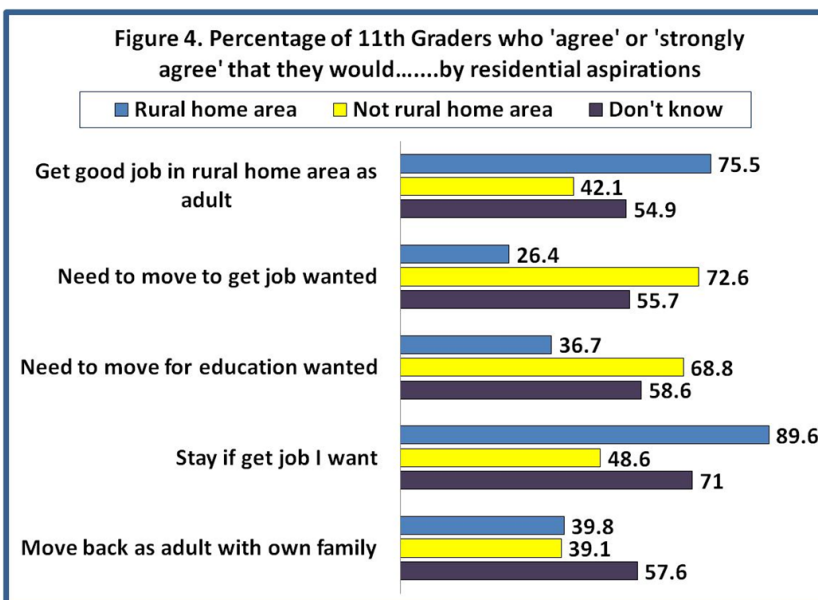
A higher percentage of youth who want to stay in their rural home area see labor and production occupations (e.g., manufacturing) as their job aspiration when compared to youth who want to live elsewhere or don't know where they want to live (Figure 3). Just under half (49.2 %) of rural youth who want to stay in their rural home area report professional or managerial occupations as their career choice, compared to 61% of youth with residential aspirations to live elsewhere or who don't know where they want to live. The percentage who wanted technical/service or other occupations was quite similar across residential aspirations.



Do Rural Youth View Their Rural Home Area as a Place They Can Achieve Their Goals?

Rural youth in the 11th grade were asked their views about whether their goals could be met in the rural area in which they lived in 11th grade. Respondents indicated if they 'strongly agreed' 'agreed' 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with different statements about their home community. Figure 4 shows the responses for youth who want to live in their rural home area, not in the rural home area or who didn't know where they wanted to live at age thirty.

* **JOBS:** Three-quarters of 11th grade students who want to live in the rural home area agreed or strongly agreed that they could get a good job in this area, while 42.1% of those who want to live elsewhere agreed. When asked about whether they would have to move to get the job they wanted, a different way of asking about whether the rural home area provides adequate employment opportunities, just over one quarter (26.4%) of youth who wanted to live in rural home area agreed or strongly agreed they would have to move. This compares with 72.6% of those who want to live elsewhere indicating they would have to move to get the job they wanted. In both of these questions, youth who weren't sure about where they wanted to live were between the other two groups, with 54.9 % saying they could get a good job and 55.7% saying they would have to move. Note however, that getting a 'good' job is not the same as getting 'the job they wanted.'



* **EDUCATION:** A higher percentage, 36.7%, of youth wanting to stay in the rural home area agreed or strongly agreed that they would have to move for the education they wanted, while 68.8% of those wanting to live outside of the rural area indicated they would need to move to get the education they wanted. Getting the job these 11th grade youth wanted was more strongly associated with residential aspirations than were educational aspirations.

What Might Make Rural Youth Want to Stay in Their Rural Home Area?

Youth were asked if they would stay in their rural home area if they could get the job they wanted. Not surprisingly, 89.6% of those who want to live in the rural home area say they would stay if they could get the job they wanted, and almost half (48.6%) of those youth who say they want to live outside their rural home area, say they would stay if they could get the job they wanted. Seventy-one percent of youth who don't know where they want to live would stay if they could get the job they wanted. Clearly, the ability to find the job or career desired influences youth residential aspirations. Helping youth to identify careers available in their rural home community may help them as they consider career and residential aspirations.

Do Rural Youth Want to Return to Their Rural Home Area as Adults?

The rural 11th grade students in the RYE study also were asked if they wanted to move away from their rural home area for a while but then move back when they have a family. Roughly 40% of youth who wanted to live in the rural home area and 39% who did not want to live in the rural home area said they wanted to move back as an adult when they had a family. Almost sixty percent of those who didn't know their residential preference said they wanted to move back as an adult with a family.

This suggests that even though rural youth may see the need to move away to achieve educational and career goals, a fairly substantial share would like to return to their rural home area as an adult. Uncertainty about jobs available and the perceived or actual mismatch between youth career goals and the careers available in the rural home community seem to be driving some of the preferences of youth to move away. On the other hand, among the 52% of rural youth who don't want to stay in their rural home area just over half indicate that finding the job they want in the rural home area would not make them want to stay and sixty percent do not want to return as an adult with a family. Their reasons for wanting to leave their rural home community go beyond job and educational opportunities.



THANK YOU!

The Rural Youth Education Study provides information that is essential to gain better understanding of the factors that contribute to rural youth developing and attaining educational, career, and residential goals. What we learn from the study will help youth, families, schools, and community leaders better understand how to help students as they explore and make these important decisions. We appreciate the time the students take to complete the surveys and we appreciate parent support of the study. We also thank the schools for collaborating with us to administer the surveys.

Rural Youth Education Study — Next Steps

- ◆ If your child was in the 11th grade during the 2008/2009 school year, we will be sending you information during Spring of 2010 to stay in contact with you and your child. Once the students who participated in the RYE study reach age eighteen, the RYE study plans to contact them directly to request updated contact information and their continued participation in the RYE study.
- ◆ The fourth wave of data collection for the RYE study will occur in the Spring of 2011. At this time, the 11th grade students during the 2008-2009 school year will mostly be one year past high school graduation. During the Spring of 2011 we will again be making contact with the youth who have participated in the RYE study to find out what they are doing, whether their goals have changed and whether they are achieving their goals.

Study CONTACT

Dr. Diane K. McLaughlin
The Pennsylvania State University
Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology
814-863-8626 dkk@psu.edu

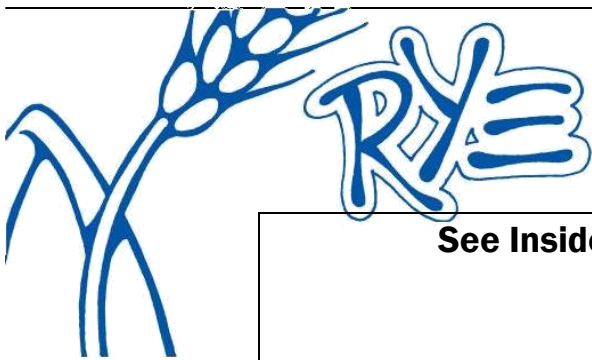
More information about the RYE Study can be found at the following website:

<http://rye.aers.psu.edu>

Stay or Go? Fact Sheet Summary

One-fifth of 11th grade students in the rural schools in the Rural Youth Education Study reported that when they were age 30 they wanted to live in the rural community they called home in 11th grade, but even in 11th grade 27% didn't know where they wanted to live. This seeming preference of rural youth to move away as adults has been a problem facing some rural areas for decades. Continued loss of a majority of young adults, without immigration to replace them, places rural communities at risk of slowly dying. Parents often are torn between wanting their children to live nearby and wanting their children to be able to have the best opportunities for their futures. Conversations about future plans can help youth to work through these difficult and sometimes stressful decisions.

As you read this fact sheet about the residential aspirations of these 11th grade students in rural Pennsylvania, you will find that the story is not as clear cut as a vast majority of rural youth want to leave. In fact, youth do seem to balance opportunities for education and obtaining the jobs that they want in their rural home community as they consider where to live as an adult. In 11th grade, among youth who say they want to live elsewhere, almost half say they would stay in their rural home community if they could get the job they want. Some who say they want to leave also indicate an interest in returning when they have a family of their own. Clearly, the majority of rural youth are not focused on leaving their rural home areas permanently, suggesting opportunities for rural communities to identify strategies to encourage rural youth who want to stay or return to be able to do so.



Rural Youth Education Study

See Inside for Information Regarding:

The RYE Study

Student Residential Aspirations

**How Educational and Occupational Aspirations are
Related to Residential Aspirations**

Factors That Are Associated with Residential Aspirations

PENNSTATE



College of
Agricultural
Sciences

Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology