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The Social Profile of Rural England

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Summary
This paper uses two longitudinal datasets in juxtaposition to investigate the social differences between two sectors of Rural England and Urban England. It uses the new classification of rurality developed for the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), and applies it to the Millennium Cohort Study, and the newly extended ONS Longitudinal Study spanning 4 census since 1971. Its conclusions, so far, are that the social and demographic profile of Rural England is not enormously different from that of the urban population. On many counts there is little difference at all. There are systematic tendencies for a higher proportion of more prosperous people to be living in the 'countryside', especially in the smaller and more dispersed settlements, and conversely for the poorest people to be living in cities and large towns, but the differences are not absolute, neither group is totally absent from either environment. The high degree of exchange of population - an exodus of men and women from rural areas in youth, matched by an influx of adults in mid-life (rather than at retirement ages) means there is considerable churning of the population, producing a relatively socially homogenous population. There is some evidence of selective in-migration helping to raise the level of educational attainment in the rural population, but other flows tend to bring rural and urban averages closer together. The migration flow which is contributing to differences between Rural and Urban England is not internal but international. The minority ethnic groups, of immigrants and their descendants, have settled almost exclusively in urban areas. To the extent that their multi-cultural variation in factors such as family size, overcrowding, female employment, religion and beliefs about the family, affect the urban average, this tends to exaggerate the otherwise small differences between the rural population and indigenous' urban population.

The Social Profile of Rural England

INTRODUCTION

This paper documents features of the relative affluence of Rural England. We use longitudinal evidence to ask:

- What types of people, in terms of age, sex, social advantage and deprivation are more likely to be found in, stay in or move into and out of rural areas?
- Has migration in England changed the socio-demographic profile in rural areas?
- Does it lead to the homogenization or differentiation of social characteristics in rural and urban England?
- In other words does counter-urbanization involve the colonization of rural areas by affluent former city dwellers?

We take data from the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) and the Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study (LS) to record the social profile of geographical mobility in and out of rural areas of England. We take the new official definition of rurality that has been developed for the government agencies concerned with policy for rural areas, and is, to our knowledge, the first academic study to apply this new definition to any longitudinal data set i.e., one which tracks individuals through time.

The plan of the paper is as follows

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THE DATA SETS

The Millennium Cohort Study

The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) consists of 18,819 babies born in the UK over a 12-month period in 2000/2001, and living in selected UK electoral wards at age 9 months. It is clustered in 398 wards (or amalgamations thereof) across the UK, 200 in England. In these about 70% of all births in between September 2000 and August 2001 were in the target sample, of which 11,533 families (72%) responded. These families will be followed up wherever they move to, the results of the second sweep becoming available in 2005. 68 of the English clusters have been classified here as rural, containing 1382 families, or 12 percent of the families surveyed in England (17% after reweighting). Although it focuses on a narrow age group (and their parents whose ages range more widely) MCS is a rich source of information on the socio-economic circumstances of a large sample of families, along with information on income, health and attitudes which are not collected in the census. For further details on the sample design and response rate, see Plewis et al (2004), and for some descriptive results of the first survey, Dex and Joshi (2004).

The Millennium Cohort evidence is used here, among other things, to investigate the contrast between rural and urban areas in the extent to which individual deprivation is geographically concentrated. To the extent that rural areas are more socially heterogeneous than urban neighbourhoods, the area-based delivery of anti-poverty policies may be less well targeted. The sample was deliberately stratified to over-sample people living in areas of high child poverty rates and concentrations of ethnic minorities (see Table 1). Thus 2,394 of the 11,533 families responding in England were from wards with a high ethnic minority population, though this represents only 5.8% when the sample is re-weighting to account for the high sampling fraction. The rest of the wards were divided according to whether on not they fell into the top quartile of wards in England and Wales on the Child Poverty Index, i.e. had a local child poverty rate of over 38.4 percent. Families were over-represented in this stratum, as were wards with high child poverty rates, but the average number of families per ward is also smaller in the more advantaged stratum. This reflects the very large size of some inner city wards, but also the smaller population size of rural wards. For the purposes of this paper it should be noted that none of the minority

ethnic wards fell outside Urban England, and only a very small minority of the 'other disadvantaged' sampling points. Just one ward (with only responding 9 families and very high Child Poverty Index in 1998 of 76%) was selected from deeply rural areas ('villages'). There were 6 wards in the more densely settled rural areas ('small towns') containing 232 responding families in places with an average Child Poverty Index of 48%. Otherwise 1,141 'rural' respondents came from 61 wards with an average child poverty rate of 16% in 1998. This leads us to expect higher general levels of prosperity in the rural areas, but also confirms that the rural poor do exist, though not in the sort of concentrations the sampling strategy has been able to 'harvest' in urban areas. On a technical level, it means that the Millennium Cohort does not provide as large an unweighted sample of the rural poor as it does for urban areas. This reinforces the case for looking at supplementary sources of evidence.

Table 1: Number of wards*, families and average Child Poverty Index for sample achieved in England, Millennium Cohort Study, survey at 9 months *(Number of families italics*)

	Villages/ dispersed	**Rural towns/ fringe**	**Urban**	**Total**
Wards with high **minority ethnic** population	0	0	19 *2394*	**19** ***2394***
			CPI = 60.2	**CPI = 60.2**
Other **disadvantaged** wards	1 *9*	6 *232*	64 *4281*	**71** ***4522***
	CPI = 75.5	CPI = 48.4	CPI = 50.0	**CPI = 49.9**
Non-disadvantaged	39 *614*	22 *527*	75 *3476*	**136** ***4617***
	CPI = 15.0	CPI = 17.2	CPI = 22.3	**CPI = 20.7**
Total	**40** ***624***	**28** ***758***	**158** ***10151***	**226** ***11533***
	CPI = 16.0	**CPI = 26.7**	**CPI = 42.9**	**CPI = 40.4**

* Original electoral ward before the amalgamation of small wards in to 'superwards' (see Plewis et al 2004). Numbers of wards and families unweighted

The ONS Longitudinal Study

The ONS Longitudinal Study links individual records on 1% of the population of England and Wales across each decennial Census since 1971, and also collects vital event data such as births, deaths, emigration and cancer registration (see Hattersley and Creeser 1995 and Celsius/ ONS website). The study has already been used for a number of investigations of geographical and social mobility (Creeser and Gleave 2000) but this is one of the first projects to analyse the results of the 2001 census data link, which has only recently become available in 2004. A set of Census-based rural residence histories, focussing on the time points 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001, is combined with selected indicators of socio-economic position such as family structure, qualifications and housing tenure. The possibilities have not been exhausted.

THE GEOGRAPHY

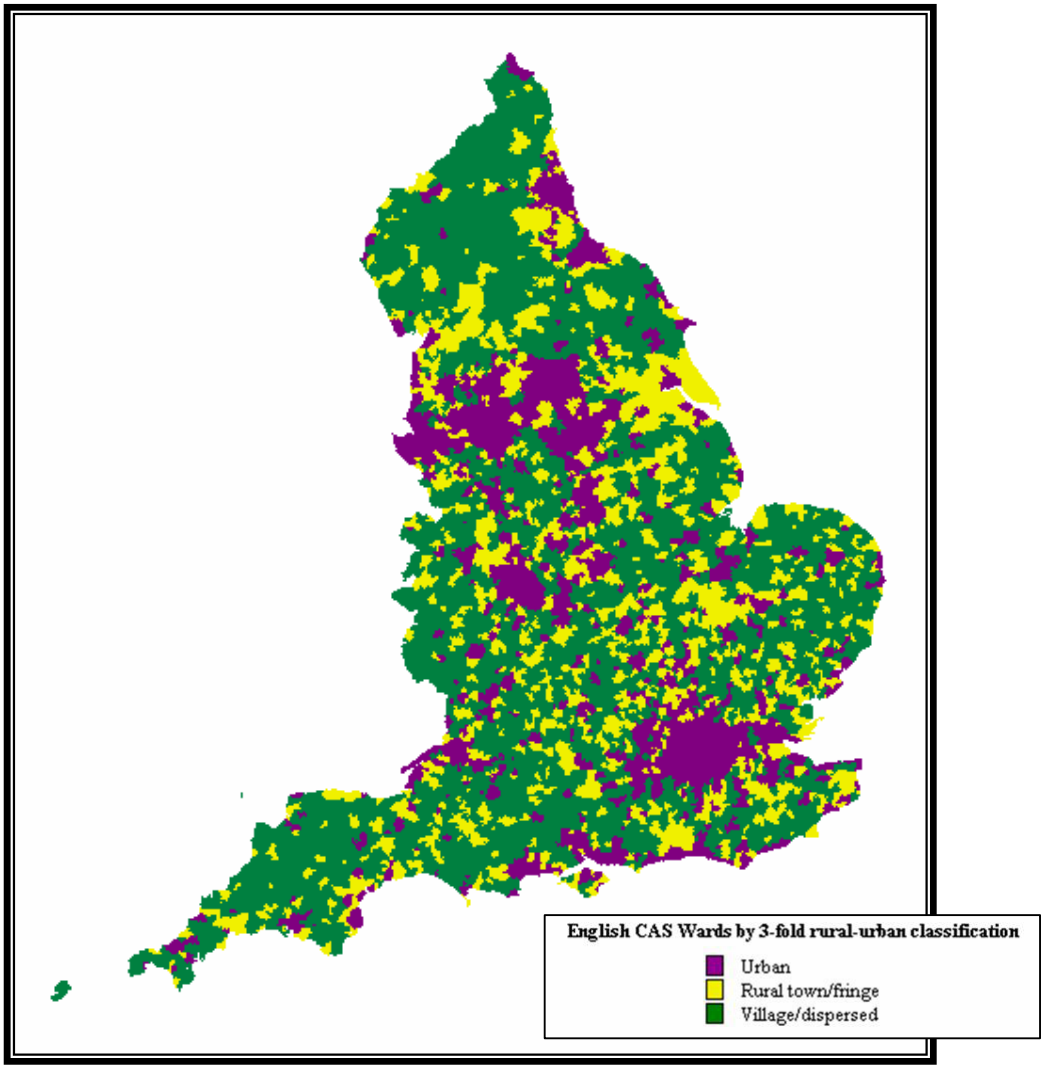
This study is confined to England, because, with the devolution of government in the smaller countries of the United Kingdom, this is where the writ of Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) runs, and the classification of rurality which we used was initially only available for England. The new classification of rural areas, prepared by our colleagues in the Birkbeck Rural Evidence Research Centre (Countryside Agency 2004) is based solely on information about settlement patterns. It looks at the size of settlements and the sparsity of human habitation. It is concerned with proximity to inhabited space rather than population density simply measured, and it does not use information about the occupations of the inhabitants or the functions of settlements. Indeed, many people are surprised at how few inhabitants of rural England are engaged in what are thought of as traditional 'rural' occupations. Only 1.4 percent of the economically active people living in rural England in 2001 (on the definition used here) were engaged in agricultural, forestry or fishing occupations. British agriculture is no longer labour-intensive, many rural inhabitants work in towns or in rural-based service industries such as tourism.

The new official classification was based on assigning very small zones (census output areas, average population 150 households) to a hierarchy of settlement size, and also to a measure of proximity to other settlements. For our purposes it was

necessary to work within the boundaries of electoral wards (average population 5,000) which may in practice contain output areas of different degrees of rurality. Based on the predominant characteristics of the output areas within each ward, it is possible to classify wards into urban (i.e. settlements of at least 10,000); small towns (up to 10,000) or town fringe; and villages and dispersed (for village definition, see Bibby & Shepherd, 2004). At the ward level, it is not possible to distinguish dispersed areas, since ward boundaries are drawn to ensure a certain number of inhabitants are included. This geography is illustrated in Map 1.

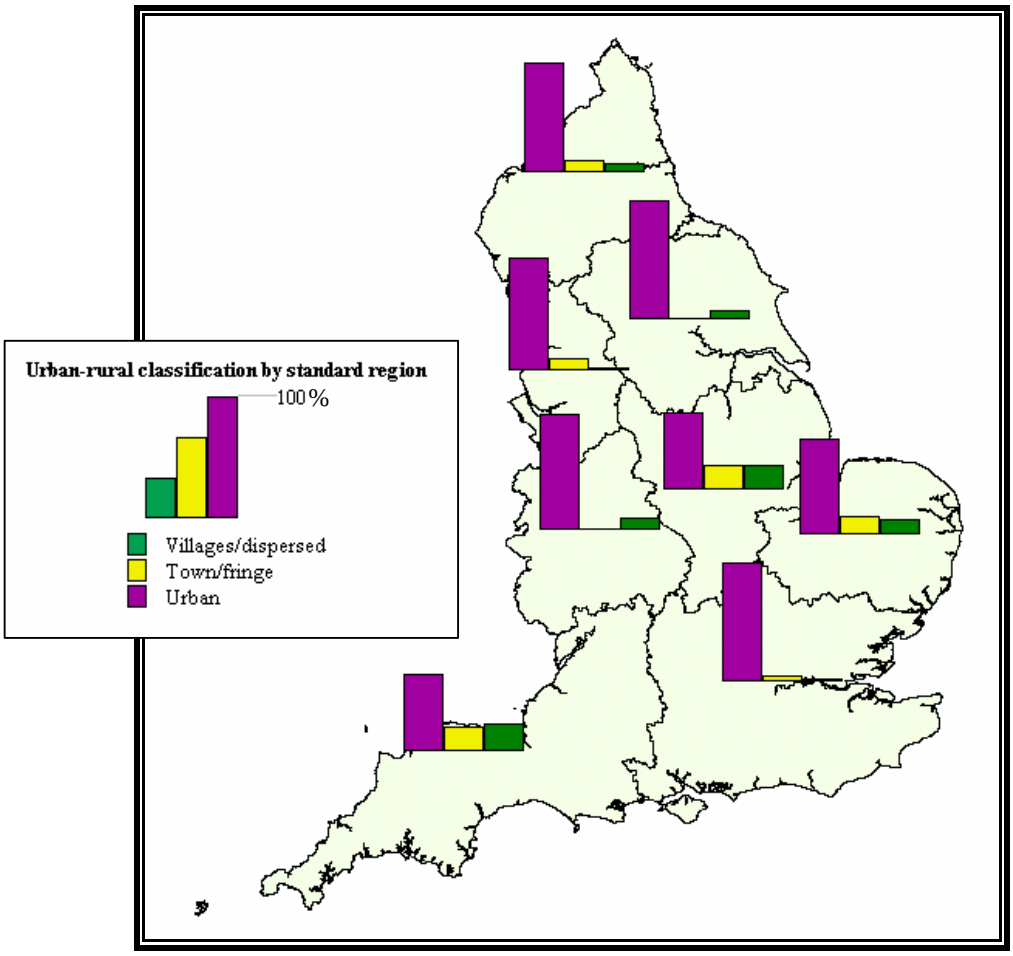
Although the majority of the surface area is coloured green, and bears some resemblance to the map of constituencies returning Conservative or Liberal-Democrat Members of Parliament, it is only a minority of the population who lives there – 8 percent in 2001 in wards classified as villages or dispersed. 11 percent lived in the small towns or urban fringe, which we also classify as rural, and 81 percent in urban areas, which we do not attempt to differentiate in this paper by further features of settlement, such as population size, conurbation, inner city or inner/ outer suburbs.

Map 1: Rurality of Wards in England in 2001:



As it only covers a sample of wards, we cannot provide a detailed map locating the members of the Millennium Cohort across the whole of England, (and it would be impermissibly disclosive to plot exact locations) but Map 2 summarises their distribution by region (the South East incorporates London). The rural minority is, as we would expect from Map 1, somewhat more in evidence in the South West, the East Midlands and East Anglia than elsewhere.

Map 2: Proportion MCS respondents by urban-rural classification in standard region, England 2000-2001 (weighted)



Source Millennium Cohort Study Sweep 1

We also do not attempt to reconstruct the past history of settlement patterns when we consider rurality of the population at previous censuses back to 1971. The construction of the indicator requires a massive exercise of digitized settlement data which is only available so far for 2001, and may never be feasible to replicate at for earlier dates. The principle is that we attempt to impose the same geography over the past 30 years when we look back at censuses since 1971. If a locality (ward) was classified as rural or urban in 2001, we hold that classification constant over the previous census years. This procedure would be straightforward if ward boundaries also remained constant. As it was, lookup- tables were available to translate the ward geography of 2001 to that of 1991 and 1981, but we had to create our own lookup table to link 1971 wards to 2001. This was done by means of the information that many LS members had not changed address between these censuses, In that case,

their ward in 1971 could be given the same value of the rural classification as they had in 1981. Some of the smallest wards in 1971, accounting for 1.1% of the sample population, did not have any non-moving LS member, and had to be assigned to an indicator which could only be dichotomous on the basis of the local government organization at that time into rural and urban districts. It may be possible, at a later stage of our project, to allow for places changing their classification, but at this stage, the first approximation is to assume the classification is constant.

THE DYNAMIC DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE 1971-2001:

Movement of population between rural and urban England

Just under one fifth of the English population included in our extract from the Census were living in rural areas – on the new official definition (18.7% of those included in the 1% sample and present at the 2001 Census). The longitudinal linkage enables us to say how many of those people had also been living in "Rural England" in 1971.

Table 2: Distribution of Population of England in 2001 by Rural-Urban location in 1971

	All present in 2001	All over 30 in 2001	Rural over 30	Urban over 30
Rural in both 1971 and 2001	4.9	7.6	37.9	
Urban in 1971-Rural in 2001	6.5	10.1	50.6	12.6
Not present 1971-Rural 2001	7.4	2.3	11.5	
Rural 1971- Urban 2001	5.5	8.5	42.6	10.6
Urban in both 1971 and 2001	36.9	57.7		72.1
Not present 1971-Urban 2001	38.9	13.9		17.3
All rural in 2001	**18.7**	**20.0**		
Net moves to rural since 1971, as % of base population		*1.6*	*8.0*	*2.0*
Base numbers	**504816**	**323486**	**64624**	**258862**

Population enumerated in England in 2001. Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

As explained above, we take the same geographical boundaries as those associated with the 2001 classification, thus treating localities according to their 2001 settlement pattern. On this basis, 5% of the English population had been rural dwellers at both dates, 6% had moved into rural from urban England and 7% were not present in either sector in 1971. Most of those not present (80%) had good reason for their absence in that they were aged under 30 in 2001, and hence not yet born in 1971. The remaining recruits to the rural population are either migrants from other countries (including the rest of the UK as well as the rest of the world) or cases which have been missed by the LS. This may occur either because of linkage failure or failure to be enumerated in the previous Census. We make no further attempt to distinguish among these 'outsiders' here. If we exclude those under 30, the share of the rural population moving in from urban England over this thirty year period is 50.6%, the other half consists of 37.9% who were present in rural England at both points and 11.4% were not present (though alive) in 1971.

There is another group, slightly less numerous than those moving from urban to rural England who moved in the opposite direction (8.5% of the total population, equivalent to 43% of the number of people over 30 present in rural areas in 2001). There was thus a net gain from population flows from urban to rural areas of 8% of the rural population. It also gained 3% from "elsewhere". Although some of the flows from "elsewhere" are people who were present in England but missed by the 1971 LS sample, or moving in from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, the majority of them are international migrants, who tend to settle in urban rather than rural areas.

There were also a substantial number of people who had been present in 1971 but were not present in 2001 (nearly half again the numbers present (47.6%)). Most of these had died, but again this also includes people who had moved "elsewhere". This time "elsewhere" includes under-enumeration at the 2001 Census. The proportions of those present in 1971 who disappear (or die) across 30 years rises with age. It is about one quarter of those aged 30-59 in 2001 (aged 0-29 in 1971) rising to 88% of those who were or would have been, over 80 in 2001 (over 50 in 1971). There is remarkably little difference in this outflow from rural or urban origins – fractionally more of those in rural areas in 1971 survive into their 60s and 70s, but this hint of lower mortality in

rural areas is not apparent for the over 80s. On the whole, this comparison suggests that rural areas are as likely as urban areas to produce out-migrants from England (or census non-completers), which in turn suggest we do not witness elevated rates of international out-migration from the urban destinations despite the international immigrant flow to urban areas.

Turning back to internal moves between rural and urban England, the net move to rural areas (8% of the 2001 rural population old enough to have made the move is not uniformly spread across age groups. There was a net outflow from rural to urban areas by people who were under 10 at the outset (and aged 30 – 39 in 2001) – equivalent to 4.4% of the population resident in rural areas in 2001. At ages 40 through 69, the net outflow is over 10% in the other direction, peaking for those age 50 – 59 in 2001 at 17% representing net movement to rural areas by people who were in their twenties at the outset. At ages over 70 in 2001, the net inflow is still positive but smaller (5.7% 70 – 79, 4.4% 80+) reflecting a diminution of moves in each direction at higher ages.

In terms of the age composition of the gross flows the peak cohort for movers from urban to rural is those who were 50-59 in 2001 (and therefore 20-29 in 1971) who formed 24% of the flow, but those who were born 10 and 20 years later were also almost as numerous as this cohort among the arrival in rural England. They had a younger age profile than those who were in rural areas at both times (see Table 4).

The people who left the rural areas were also somewhat younger than those who stayed, and, they were younger still than the incomers with the highest percentage in the most recent cohort – those who had been children under 10 in 1971. This age pattern suggests that people in the age group approaching retirement in 2001 are likely to have moved into rural areas but it does not tell us when in the thirty year period they moved. The lower rates of movement among people over 60 suggest that movement into the countryside on retirement is not a dominant flow. The data also indicates that the most likely age group to have left rural for urban areas was the youngest, but again the 30 year transitions do not show whether these moves were predominantly when they were aged under 10 (and presumably moved with their parents) or sometime between 10 and 29, when they are likely to be leaving their rural childhood home for an urban existence.

Timing of moves within the 1971 – 2001 period

To investigate these questions we look at flows over the intervening decennial periods (see Table 3). In the middle decade, 1981 – 91, the net inflow to rural areas was negative. In the other two ten-year periods, the net inflow to rural areas was at a similar level. Thus there is now an answer to a question posed by Champion (1989) as to whether the slowdown in the exodus from cities in the 1980s was an end or a pause in the process of counter-urbanization. Although the de-concentration of population has resumed, it is still only a minority of which is involved. In all cases there was a clear age pattern in that people leave rural areas during the decade which contains their 20th birthday, i.e. those who were 10 – 19 at the first date and 20 – 29 at the second. In the ten year rates it is the next ten years – those that contains the thirtieth birthday - that the flow to rural areas is highest. It is clear from the ten year rates that the high rate of movement into rural areas over the 30 year period by those aged 50 – 59 in 2001 was not a pre-retirement rush, it is just that the mid-life years (from mid twenties onwards) are the ages when people came to settle in rural England.

The ten year moves also reveal more about the net outward moves of the youngest cohort alive for the whole 3 decades. Movers aged under 10 were relatively likely to move into rural areas (with their mid-life parents). The exodus occurred as they moved from teens to twenties, and as they were approaching the counter flow had already started.

Although in many parts of the world, migration between rural and urban zones is very different for men and women, this does not apply to England. The sex composition of the flows between urban and rural areas is more or less equal numbers of males and females moving in each direction, and showing a similar sex composition to the non-movers.

Table 3: Gross and net flows between rural and urban England, 1971-81, 1981-1991 and 1991-2001, among those present at two dates in the LS

		Age at the later date								
		10-19	**20-29**	**30-39**	**40-49**	**50-59**	**60-69**	**70-79**	**80+**	**Total**
1971-2001	**From urban to rural**			6976	7515	7885	4887	3523	1903	**32689**
	From rural to urban			7559	6087	5271	3837	3068	1712	**27534**
	net			*-583*	*1428*	*2614*	*1050*	*455*	*191*	***5155***
1971-1981	**From urban to rural**	4406	4463	5694	2941	2280	2145	1351	482	**23762**
	From rural to urban	3247	4383	3808	2133	1623	1316	1060	404	**17974**
	net	*1159*	*80*	*1886*	*808*	*657*	*829*	*291*	*78*	***5788***
1981-1991	**From urban to rural**	4452	4664	5824	5453	3791	3511	2294	1068	**31057**
	From rural to urban	5186	7969	5826	5494	4042	3718	2754	1371	**36360**
	net	*-734*	*-3305*	*-2*	*-41*	*-251*	*-207*	*-460*	*-303*	***-5303***
1991-2001	**From urban to rural**	2992	2284	5371	3796	2905	1846	1107	673	**20974**
	From rural to urban	2284	4949	3762	2239	1953	1269	962	613	**18031**
	net	*708*	*-2665*	*1609*	*1557*	*952*	*577*	*145*	*60*	***2943***

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study: Population enumerated in England at both relevant dates

1% sample of census

Table 4: Rural -Urban movement between 1971 and 2001and location in intervening censuses, Population of England in the LS at 1971, 1981, 1991, and 2001 censuses, percentage of each sector in 2001

		Age in 2001						Total
		30-39	**40-49**	**50-59**	**60-69**	**70-79**	**80+**	**30+**
Rural population *Relative to those rural in 2001:*	Rural at all 4 censuses	27.7	25.3	31.0	41.6	46.9	46.2	**34.1**
	Rural Returner: rural at 1971 and 2001 but urban at least one intervening census	13.6	13.3	9.0	7.3	4.9	5.3	**9.7**
	Urban in 1971, rural in 2001	58.7	61.4	60.0	51.1	48.2	48.6	**56.2**
	Urban in 2001, but rural at least one census	98.0	79.4	65.6	60.3	59.9	62.8	**72.8**
	Base number: Rural population in 2001	*9438*	*10034*	*11252*	*8424*	*6445*	*3332*	*48925*
Urban population *Relative to those urban in 2001:*	Urban at all 4 censuses	77.2	78.5	79.9	83.3	84.5	84.1	**80.5**
	Urban Returner: urban at1971 and 2001 but rural at least one intervening census	8.2	8.0	7.7	5.3	4.4	4.7	**6.8**
	Rural in 1971, urban in 2001	14.5	13.5	12.4	11.4	11.1	11.2	**12.6**
	Rural in 2001, but urban at least one census	16.8	20.2	21.1	16.2	13.8	13.6	**17.6**
	Base number: Urban population in 2001	*40645*	*37052*	*36772*	*30395*	*24895*	*13194*	*182953*

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study – 1% sample numbers

We were also interested to see how much movement there had been between sectors during the intervening decades and how many of those recorded in rural areas at both end points had left and then returned. Another feature of longitudinal data, not available from cross-sectional snapshots, is the whereabouts of one-time rural dwellers who are not currently living in rural areas. Table 4 takes the LS members who are known to be living in either rural or urban England at all four censuses, and shows for each sector, by age in 2001, the percentage who had been enumerated in their home sector four times running, identifiable returners, other incomers and those who had left for the other sector. One third (34%) of the rural population over 30 had been in rural locations at all 4 censuses. This does not rule out their having had some urban sojourns between censuses, nor their having moved location within rural England, nor the older cohorts having moved (back) in before 1971, but it is the best indicator so far of stable rural residence. This proportion of stable residents rises with age from around a quarter among those aged under 50 in 2001 to nearly a half (around 46%) in the oldest two cohorts. For them, the 30 years covered does not include what seem to be the peak moving ages of 10 – 40.

The four census analyses can also detect some people who have left rural areas and come back. 10% of the rural population (in the table) had been present in rural areas at both 1971 and 2001, but had been in urban England on at least one of the intervening censuses. This proportion is again higher for those under 50 (around 13%) tailing to 5% for the oldest two cohorts. Again some of the older rural residents might be returners from sorties before 1971, but among those under 50, the proportion of rural dwellers who have come back is clearly less than those who have left. Most of the incomers have urban origins. In Table 4, the inflow from urban areas accounts for 50% of all the rural population over 30 and around 60% of the rural population aged 30 – 49.

Another measure of the degree of population exchange between rural and urban areas is to look at the numbers we know have left rural for urban England and compare them with the cross-sectional measure of population present in 2001. If rural England could claim connection with all those former ruralites currently in urban England as well as those currently resident, the population with rural “roots” within the past 30

years rises by nearly three quarters (73 %) and nearly doubles (+98 %) for the cohort aged 30 – 39 in 2001. With a sustained flow of in-migrants and an ebb and flow (and ebb) of out migrants there is a fair degree of population turnover in the population of rural England. The same is not true of the larger sector, urban England. Corresponding figures of the urban population of 2001 who had been present at all four censuses, thus omitting international immigrations, show the vast majority to have been present in urban England at all four points (around 80%); returners to urban areas who had been once or twice in a rural residence accounted for 7% and rural to urban migration for 13% of the destination population.

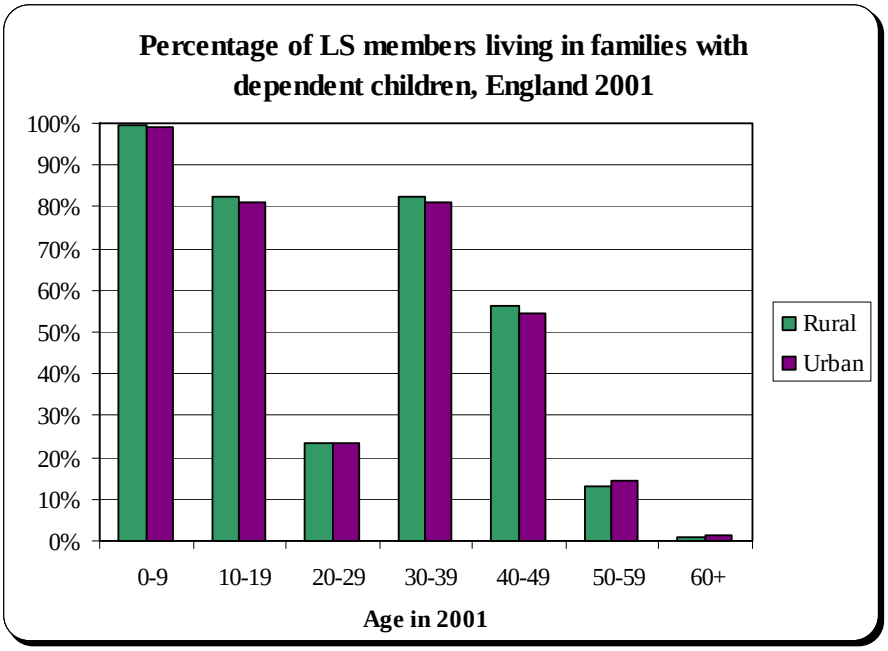
As a proportion of the urban population, the number of former urbanites currently living in rural areas was also modest, one sixth (18 %) compared with 73 % for the converse. The cohort with the most former urban residents "out-posted" in rural England was aged 50 – 59 in 2001, the moves mostly having been made after the 1971 and 1981 censuses when this cohort was aged 20 – 39.

THE SOCIAL PROFILE

Family Composition

The dip in percentage of the population which is living in rural areas during ages 20 – 29 marks a period of the life-course for most people when they are between their family of origin and forming their own family. We have looked at the living arrangements of the LS members in 2001 to see if the period of absence from rural areas does indeed coincide with a living arrangement where there is no dependent child in the family, see Chart 1. Family living arrangements are classified by the presence of any dependent children in the home where the LS member lives and whether there are or two parents present.

Chart 1: Percentage of LS members living in families with dependant children



Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

The LS Member is classified as being in one of these families if they are either themselves one of the dependent children or one of the parents. Dependent children are those living in households (rather than communal establishments) under the minimum school leaving age of 16 or still in secondary education. At ages over 50, family living arrangements are relatively uncommon in both urban and rural England. They are also uncommon at ages 20 – 29, when the proportion of the total rural population is at a minimum. Otherwise there are not big differences between age groups in the proportion of them living with and without children be they in rural or urban areas.

There is however a contrast in the proportion of single parent families in rural areas, which is 12% of all members of single parent families compared to 20% of two-parent families and 19% of those living without children in a family. The Millennium Cohort Study, too, found that single parents are relatively rare in rural areas. 15% of the families had one parent families in urban settings and 7 percent in rural areas. This is a lower fraction than in those families in the LS with children up to school-leaving

age, whose parents have had a longer time to part company, but still the rural urban differential is replicated.

We wondered if this contrast could be attributed to the different ethnic composition of rural and urban areas. As hinted above, international migration has made many English cities into multi-cultural environments. Many of the minority groups, even those who are not recent immigrants are characterized by relatively poor economic status, which is in general associated with more fragile family structures, although the cultural pressures in favour of two-parent families are also particularly strong in some ethnic groups (particularly those originating in Asia).

The proportion of the population in minority ethnic groups (including whites, such as Turks, from origins outside the British Isles) is very low in rural areas. It is around 3 percent in the both the census of population and the cohort survey. This proportion applies in both types of rural areas (villages and small towns), both among the population living in families with dependent children and those in other living arrangements. Table 5 shows the broad ethnic group of the population living in homes with dependent children, divided into single and two-parent families. Those identifying themselves with British or Irish White ethnicity are distinguished from the rest. There is little difference in the proportion in the ethnic majority among people living in one or two parent families within urban and rural sectors. The table also shows that one parent families are also a smaller minority in rural areas, just over one in ten, compared to one in six nationally and 19 per cent among the urban families in which an LS member was living. The census analysis also revealed (not shown) that the low level of one parent families in the rural areas were not due the absence of ethnic minorities, for the few minority ethnic families who were living in rural areas were just as likely as others in rural areas to have two parents.

Table 5: LS Members in the Majority ethnic group by family type and number of parents, by urban-rural residence, person living in families with dependent children, England, 2001

		Sector of residence		
		Urban	**Rural**	**Total**
Ethnic composition % British or Irish White	**One parent families**	82.1	97.2	**83.9**
	Two parent families	82.9	96.7	**85.6**
Family structure	**% of families with one parent**	18.8	11.2	**17.4**
LS Sample numbers	**One parent families**	32758	4403	**37161**
	Two parent families	141575	34790	**176365**

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

Highlights from MCS

The first thing to note (again) from Table 6 about the social profile of the rural families sampled for the Millennium Cohort Study is that none of the areas selected as housing high concentrations of ethnic minority families (over 30% Asian or Black in the ward at the 1991 census) were outside urban areas. When we consider the ethnic identity of respondents (11,695 babies) in 2001, and for current purposes distinguish only between those claiming an ethnic identity associated with the British Isles ('White British' and 'Irish British' versus the rest), it can be seen that individuals of minority ethnicity were also virtually absent from rural areas – only 3.4% of families in villages/dispersed and 3.7% in small towns. We note in passing that minority ethnic respondents were also concentrated within urban England – 31.0% lived in the 19 "ethnic wards" and 83.1% of the respondents in those wards were non-British. We also note, again, that almost none of the sample selected in villages were living in an area of high child poverty, and relatively few of the small town rural locations.

The other major axis on which wards were over-sampled was the ideal rate of child poverty, measured through administrative indicators in 1998. Again, very few of these over-sampled wards turn out to be classified as rural, such that (after weighting), under 1% of the respondents in villages are in such wards. 19% of those living in rural town/fringe were in "disadvantaged" areas and 37% in "disadvantaged" urban areas

other than “ethnic” wards. How far was this criterion at pinpointing poor families? The administrative criteria used in the sampling cannot be replicated in 2001 because of changes in the benefit system. Of various possible indicators Table 6 takes an approximation of the one used in official poverty statistics: living on net household income below 60% of the national median (Bradshaw, Mayhew et al, 2005). On this basis, about one quarter (27%) of the total sample in England were “poor”, including one in six of the families in villages/dispersed, despite the virtual absence of places where more than 38% had been on benefits in 1998. In “rural towns/fringe”, approximately the same proportion were “poor” on an individual basis (17%) as living in “poor” areas (19%), though the two sets do not overlap completely (35% of rural towns/fringe in “poor” areas have a net household income below 60% of the national median). In urban England the individual ‘poverty’ rate is almost double what it is in villages (29% vs. 15%), but it is particularly high (43%) for the minority ethnic group. “British” urban dwellers have low income more often than the rural population (26%), but the contrast is modified if the minority groups are considered separately.

On a number of other indicators of social conditions reported in Table 6, there is a geographic gradient from most to least advantaged as one crosses the sample from villages to urban areas: parents’ qualifications, lone parenthood, early first birth, no-earner families, no savings, home ownership, overcrowding, car access and mothers with long-term illness. In a few respects villages are little different to rural towns or have slightly less ‘favourable’ indicators: two earner couples, living in a flat (or other accommodation, not a house or bungalow) and fathers with long-term illness. In all but the last case, the urban outcome is less favourable than the rural areas taken together. If we separate out from urban England the ethnic groups originating from international migration, the contrast between the urban and rural British is generally moderated but only eliminated in the of the employment rates of couples and overcrowding. This is not an exhaustive list of comparisons that could be made. We have found, for example, that replies to questions about attitudes to family life differ between rural and urban England to the extent that the non-British report different sets of values.

Table 6: The proportion of some key variables from the Millennium Cohort Study by Rural-Urban Definition

MCS Variables	Village/ dispersed	Rural town/ fringe	Urban	Urban British*	Urban non-British
Living in minority ethnic area	0	0	7	1.4	32.3
Living in other disadvantaged area	0.9	19.1	37.1	37.3	35.9
Ethnicity= white British or Irish	96.6	96.3	82.0	100	0
Mothers: No qualifications	4.7	6.1	16.4	14.0	27.5
Mothers: Graduates	42.8	32.7	25.9	25.5	27.7
Fathers: No qualifications	9	8.9	16.9	15.5	23.9
Fathers: Graduates	41.5	36.6	29.8	28.3	37.2
Lone parent	6.0	7.7	14.7	14.4	16.1
Mothers aged 21 or less at first birth	11.4	16	24.8	25.2	22.7
Mothers aged 28 or over at first birth	58.1	48	37.9	38.8	33.7
Couples with no earner	2.2	4.2	7.7	6.7	12.6
Couples with two earners	55.5	55.9	51.2	55.0	33.7
Lone parent earners	44.9	31.8	22.2	21.1	27.1
Below 60% median equivalent H-hold income	15.3	17.2	28.9	26.0	43.4
No savings	28.1	38.2	46.3	46.1	47.0
Housing Tenure: Owner occupier	71.5	73.8	62.1	64.7	50.2
Housing Tenure: Social Housing	13.3	11.2	24.2	23.1	29.3
Not in a house/bungalow	4.5	4	14	11.2	26.7
Overcrowding	4	5.1	9.8	6.6	24.8
No car access	3.1	6.4	16.6	14.9	24.2
Mothers with long-term illness	20.8	21.0	21.7	22.6	17.7
Fathers with long-term illness	25.6	23.1	20.3	21.0	17.0
Sample Numbers (unweighted)†	**624**	**758**	**10151**	**7032**	**3083**
Sample Numbers (weighted)	**818**	**860**	**8202**	**6703**	**1472**

* 'Urban British' are defined as all those urban cases for British or Irish White, all other ethnicities are included in the 'Urban non-British' variable (main respondent's (normally mother's) ethnicity).

† Sample numbers for 'Urban Non-British' and 'Urban British' do not equal 'Urban' as the ethnicity variable has 36 missing urban cases.

Source: Millennium Cohort Study, First Survey

Other evidence (not reported in detail here) comes from a survey of Health Visitors working in areas where MCS had samples. They were asked about the availability of a number of services for young families in, or adjacent to, sampled wards. This exercise showed little difference in service availability for rural and urban wards (or for "disadvantaged" wards versus the rest). One exception was the Health Visitor's perception of the availability of Local Authority nurseries in rural areas. This is not, in

practice, a form of childcare used by many families. In rural areas private nurseries were slightly more commonly reported as being used for nine month old children than elsewhere – but we cannot tell whether this reflects affluence of rural families or constraints on subsidised provision in 2001 (for more information, see Brasset-Grundy et al 2004).

Spotlight on Lone mothers

We ask whether the relative absence of the socially disadvantaged group of lone mothers in rural England (which will help account for the relatively low rural poverty rate) is due to differential migration, or differential patterns of family formation among those who do not move between rural and urban England.

Among women aged 20-59 in 2001, the proportion who were lone mothers in villages was virtually identical, at 4.6 %, regardless of whether they were incomers since 1991 or had been in that sector ten years previously. The proportion was twice as high among the continuing urban residents (9.7%) and intermediate for women who had moved from villages to towns or to cities from villages (7.8%) This analysis does not show when the women become lone mothers, but since the median duration of lone parenthood is likely to be under ten years, there is a fair chance that they become lone mothers after leaving the village sector. Thus it seems that on this indicator, rural urban differences are largely generated in situ, in-migration to rural areas is not contributing to their 'deficit' of lone parent families, though out migration may be helping to widen the gap.

Table 7: Percentage of Women who were Lone Mothers in 2001 among population of villages* and the rest of England, 1991-2001

Residence 1991and 2001	Lone mothers in 2001 (%)	Sample Numbers
Urban or small town in 1991 to village in 2001	4.5	3675
Village in 1991 to urban or small town in 2001	7.8	4279
Village both dates	4.6	4677
Urban/Small town both dates	9.7	93241
All women aged 20-59	9.2	105872

*Village includes 'dispersed'
Population enumerated in England in both 1991 and 2001
Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

Spotlight on Graduates

Apart from the lack of minority ethnic groups and a generally higher level of prosperity in the rural localities sampled for the Millennium Cohort survey one of the social indicators which did show contrasts was the proportion of parents who were graduates of higher education, i.e. having first or higher degrees or an equivalent diploma to NVQ level 4or 5, hereafter 'graduates'. Among MCS mothers[1] surveyed in urban areas the percentage who were graduates was 25.6 percent, and in villages, 42.8 percent, with intermediate levels in small and market towns. For the fathers of the new cohort in 2001 the corresponding percentages were 29.6 and 41.5. Higher qualifications is one of the few indicators of economic status that is also available in the census. We therefore focus on them here as on the whole representing the opposite end of the economic spectrum from that occupied by lone mothers among other disadvantaged groups such.

Table 8 shows that about one quarter of the census population in 2001 in the age range from which most of the MCS parents are drawn (20-39) reported this level of qualifications. The overall level is somewhat lower than among the survey parents – possibly because of differential non-response to the survey by the less qualified, and because the census is more likely to include people who are still studying for a degree. However the census does confirm that rural inhabitants are more likely to have degrees than urban dwellers, particularly if they live in villages or open country. 27.8% of those aged 30-39 living in villages and dispersed were graduates compared to 23.5% of those living in urban England.

[1] Strictly speaking the figures apply to the child's main caregiver and her (or his) partner. In the vast majority of cases the main respondent was the child's natural mother, and the partner interview was done by the father.

Table 8: Percentage of the population with higher qualifications in 1971 and 2001 by rural-urban residence and age at each date

		Age Group							
		20 to 29	**30 to 39**	**40 to 49**	**50 to 59**	**60 to 69**	**70 to 79**	**Total**	**n 20-79**
1971	**Rural**	3.3	4.7	4.0	2.7	2.6	1.3	3.2	**60520**
	Urban	4.6	4.7	3.3	2.3	1.8	0.8	3.2	**271917**
2001	**Rural**	22.2	25.1	27.0	21.9	16.9	14.3	22.5	**60931**
	Urban	27.1	23.5	21.3	17.3	12.4	10.4	20.3	**253938**

1971 - Graduate = Highly qualified Manpower
2001 - Qualification Level 4/5: First degree, Higher degree, NVQ levels 4-5, HNC
Note persons over 74 not required to answer question on qualifications in 2001
Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

The advantage of the longitudinal information in the ONS Longitudinal Study (LS) is that we can find out whether the excess gradate population of rural England is due to higher levels of training for its original inhabitants, or if it represents a net gain of graduates in the exchange of population between rural and urban areas. We focus mainly on the longest stretch of time available to see the longest term flows yet discernible, i.e. going back to 1971. At that time, the level of higher qualifications among the adult population was much lower, apparently 3 percent of the population over 20 compared with 20.7 percent in 2001 although the different wording of the census question probably exaggerates the difference. In any case, over the period when there was a small net shift to the rural sector, there was a massive increase nationally in the qualified population, fuelled largely by cohort succession, by the expansion of higher education for cohorts who were under 20 in 1971. Taking people who were already at least 20 in 1971, Table 9 shows that one quarter of those who were already graduates and who started out in urban areas in 1971 ended up in rural areas, a bigger percentage than the 14 percent of non-graduates in urban areas in 1971. There were movements in the opposite direction: 43 per cent of graduates and 48 percent of non graduates in rural areas moved to urban England , but since this is from a smaller base, the net gain of population to rural areas was positive: 819 graduate sample members and 3,459 non-graduates. The graduates are heavily over-represented in the inflow - their share is 19 percent of the net rural inflow and 4 per cent of the total.

The differential propensity of graduates to move to rural areas is particularly concentrated on villages and sparsely inhabited areas, as illustrated in Table 10 (hereafter 'villages') which traces the proportion of people who moved (or failed to

Table 9: Distribution of graduates and others across rural and urban locations in 2001 by urban/ rural residence in 1971: England

	1971 location	2001 location %				Sample numbers	net shift to rural
		Rural			Urban		
		All	Town/fringe	Villages/dispersed			
Graduate 1971	**Rural**	57.1	26.1	31.1	42.9	1082	819
	Urban	25.3	12.1	13.2	74.7	5076	
Non-graduate 1971	**Rural**	52.4	30.1	22.3	47.6	27432	3459
	Urban	14.2	8.5	5.7	85.8	116438	
Total	**All 20+1971**	**21.9**	**12.7**	**9.2**	**78.1**	**150028**	**4278**

Sample includes all enumerated at home in England in both 1971 and 1991 age over 20 in1971 -
Graduate = Highly qualified Manpower in 1971
2001 - Qualification Level 4/5: First degree, Higher degree, NVQ levels 4-5, HNC
Note persons over 74 not required to answer question on qualifications in 2001
Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

move) between sectors who were gradates by 2001. The flows examined are up to 2001 from 1971, 1981 and 1991, a thirty, twenty and ten year gap respectively. For the thirty year span, gradates formed 28 percent of the flow to villages from the rest of England. For the other three combinations of flow or non-flow, the proportion of graduates was around 17 per cent. For the shorter range flows over twenty and thirty years the proportion of gradates remains highest in the urban to village flow, but there are more graduates than in the 1971-2001 flows in other direction, particularly from village to towns and cities. This is likely to be affected by the latter two flows including younger people in 2001 who are in the age group most likely to move into urban England, and moves could have occurred before the degree was acquired.

Table 10: Percentage of graduates in 2001 among various migration streams between 'villages and dispersed' and the rest of England

	Percentage			Sample numbers		
	1971-2001	**1981-2001**	**1991-2001**	**1971-2001**	**1981-2001**	**1991-2001**
Urban or small town to village	28.4	27.1	27.9	7162	10402	6921
Village to urban or small town	16.5	21.0	25.5	21100	14874	7877
Village both times	16.7	19.3	21.9	5032	5353	8834
Urban/Small town both dates	17.0	19.1	19.0	104253	163096	170093
Total				**137547**	**193725**	**193725**

Persons aged 20-59 in 2001, enumerated in England in the 2001 census and also at the relevant previous census. Graduate - Qualification Level 4/5: First degree, Higher degree, NVQ levels 4-5, HNC

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

Housing Tenure

Thus the longitudinal analysis of the educational profile of rural England suggests that the over-representation of relatively advantaged people is fuelled by differential migration rather than being 'home grown'. We should note that on another census variable often used as an indicator of social advantage, home ownership, the sedentary population, shown in the leading diagonal of Table 11 seems more privileged. Incomers over the period 1991-2001 to rural areas have a slightly lower rate of owner occupation than the population already there. Inter-sector movers in general are more likely to be in transitional tenures (private renting, student accommodation for example covered in the 'other category). Social housing is over-represented among those staying in the urban or small town sector, but it is particularly rare among the longer-term residents of villages.

Table 11: Housing tenure in 2001 by location in 2001 by 1991 England.

1991 location	Housing tenure in 2001	2001 location			Total
		Urban	Town/fringe	Villages/ dispersed	
Urban	Owner Occupier	75.3	78.4	77.2	**75.5**
	Social Housing	17.1	9.6	6.8	**16.6**
	Other	7.5	12.0	16.0	**7.9**
	Base numbers	**282803**	**11336**	**8228**	**302367**
Town/fringe	Owner Occupier	69.8	82.1	76.5	**79.0**
	Social Housing	11.5	12.2	8.7	**11.7**
	Other	18.7	5.7	14.8	**9.4**
	Base numbers	**7903**	**25678**	**3653**	**37234**
Villages/dispersed	Owner Occupier	71.7	79.1	80.8	**78.3**
	Social Housing	10.6	10.1	8.4	**9.2**
	Other	17.7	10.8	10.8	**12.5**
	Base numbers	**7706**	**6228**	**18196**	**32130**

[*] *Housing tenure not imputed, enumerated at both 1991 and 2001*
Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

CONCLUSIONS

The social and demographic profile of the rural English is not enormously different from that of the urban population. In many respects there is little difference at all. There are systematic tendencies for a higher proportion of more prosperous people to be living in the 'countryside', especially in the smaller and more dispersed settlements, and conversely for the poorest people to be living in cities and large towns, but the differences are not absolute, neither group is totally absent from either environment. Not all rural inhabitants are affluent, but those who are not affluent, particularly in villages are less concentrated in particularly low-income electoral wards than in urban areas. The high degree of exchange of population between these areas of residence - an exodus of men and women from rural areas in youth, matched by an influx of adults in mid-life (rather than at retirement ages) means there is considerable churning of the population, which as in the making of butter, produces a relatively socially homogenous population. We have found some evidence of selective in-migration helping to raise the relatively highly qualified composition of the rural population, but other flows tend to bring rural and urban averages closer together. The migration flow which is contributing to differences between rural and urban England

is not internal but international. The minority ethnic groups, of immigrants and their descendants, have settled almost exclusively in urban areas. To the extent that their values on variables like family size, overcrowding, female employment, religion and beliefs about the family affect the urban average, this tends to exaggerate differences between the rural population and the majority ethnic group in urban areas identifying themselves with the British Isles.

So far this investigation has been limited to a few census indicators. It would be possible to look at other characteristics of movers and stayers in rural England, such as employment, occupation, travel to work and long-term illness. It would be possible, though complicated, to look at mobility between these social states simultaneously with geographical mobility. It would be perhaps possible, subject to disclosure considerations, to investigate whether patterns of urban-rural flows vary by region. We have also ignored the possibility that localities have changed their settlement pattern over the 30 years since 1971. One of the many possible further extensions of this preliminary research would be to distinguish between first and later generation international migrants, to help understand whether the absence of people from minority ethnic groups in rural England is a problem or just a fact of life.

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