

Summary

This summary highlights the most significant findings from the State of Rural Services 2025 report, published by Rural England CIC.

The report draws on national datasets and official statistics captured up to the close of 2024 to examine the accessibility and quality of local services experienced by England's rural population. It covers multiple service areas and offers a current snapshot of rural service challenges and disparities.

Key Highlights

Health and Social Care

35% of rural hospitals have closed in the last 15 years.

13% of rural respondents reported difficulty accessing GP services, compared with 10% in urban areas.

In Rural Villages, Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings, the average minimum travel time to reach a GP surgery by public transport (where it exists) or walking is at least 57 minutes.

Only **1,706** registered care homes are located in rural England, mostly in less sparse areas.

Rural ambulance response times are significantly slower than in urban areas.

Transport and Mobility

In hamlets and isolated dwellings, buses account for less than **1%** of journeys.

Bus usage in rural areas is seen to be at a historic low in terms of service use and coverage.

Fewer than **40%** of eligible pensioners in Rural Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings used their concessionary bus passes in 2021/22, compared with nearly 70% in Urban Conurbations.

Digital and Mobile Connectivity

Between **2.2%** and **22.2%** of rural premises fall below the Government's 'decent broadband' standard of 10 Mbps, depending on location.

The gap in access to gigabit broadband between urban and rural areas remains significant.

Retail and Access to Local Services

The number of rural community shops in the UK reached over **420** in 2024, showing strong survival rates.

49% of rural convenience stores are the only shop in their community.

Over **96%** of rural postcodes with a supermarket have just one supermarket store, reducing local choice.

The proportion of people with access to free-to-use cashpoints is significantly lower in many rural districts than in urban areas.

83% of rural residents can walk to a food store in under an hour — but **less than 30%** can do so in under 30 minutes.

Employment

Only **13** Jobcentre Plus offices are located in rural settlements across England.

Local Support Services

75% of libraries are in urban areas — leaving many rural communities with limited local access.

Warm spaces in rural areas are mainly located in more accessible rural towns.

Food banks and pantries are most concentrated where there are already supermarkets — missing those in greatest need.

Children and Young People's Services

Rural families face fewer childcare places, longer journeys, and lower-quality provision than their urban counterparts — with the gaps widest in sparsely populated areas.

A slightly lower share of rural childcare places are rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted compared to those in urban areas.

Conclusion

This report shows how multiple gaps in provision add up to substantial disadvantage for rural residents.

While communities are often resilient and creative, gaps in infrastructure, funding and access remain a barrier for rural communities to equal opportunity.

For More Information

This summary provides a overview only. For full analysis, evidence and service area details, please see the full report at www.ruralengland.org



[Download the full report here.](http://www.ruralengland.org)

