RURAL YOUTH FUTURES: FOREST HILLS CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL

SURVEY RESULTS • SUMMER 2020

As rural communities face changes in local economies, populations, and workforce needs, what does the next generation of residents and workers value and want? That question was the motivation for the Rural Youth Futures project. Researchers and extension agents from several universities joined forces with local non-profits to find out what middle and high schoolers think in two forest-dependent regions: Piscataquis/Northern Somerset County in Maine and Coos County in Oregon. This is one in a series of fact sheets designed to present summary information to each participating school and county about the perceptions and aspirations of local youth.

**APPROACH**

With permission from the school principal, students in grades 6–12 at Forest Hills Consolidated School were given a link to an anonymous, electronic survey in May 2019. Participation was voluntary. Forest Hills Consolidated School had 68 students in these grades during 2018-2019, 62 of which took the survey for a participation rate of 91%. Every question was optional, so the number of responses varies by question. Fact sheets for all schools and each county are available online at: http://ewp.uoregon.edu/RuralYouth.

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

Describe the family structure you live with:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-parent, biological parents</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-parent, step family</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent, mom</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couch surf or other</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What level of education did your parents or guardians, whom you live with, complete?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduated from college or more</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to school, don't know how far</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not finish high school</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not have a job</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working now, but looking for a job</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do your parents or guardians work for pay?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, one full-time job</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, one part-time job</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, multiple jobs</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working now, but looking for a job</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not have a job</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know or N/A</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender that you identify as:

- Female (40%)
- Male (55%)
- Non-Binary (3%)
- Trans (2%)

Category that best describes you:

- Asian (2%)
- Latino/Hispanic (5%)
- Native American (7%)
- White/Caucasian (70%)
- Two or more races/ethnicities (16%)

Perception of family finances:

- More than enough for food & bills (31%)
- Enough for food & bills (34%)
- Not enough for food & bills (9%)
- Don’t know/choose not to answer (26%)

School changes from moving in past 5 years:

- 3 or more (5%)
- 2 (2%)
- 1 (18%)
- None (75%)

Born in Piscataquis or N. Somerset County:

- Yes (72%)
- No (22%)
- Don’t know (5%)

**SCHOOL CONTEXT**

**Q41 Where did you move from?**

- Forest Hills Consolidated School: 68 students
- Piscataquis/Northern Somerset County:
  - 2-parent, biological parents: 21%
  - 2-parent, step family: 4%
  - Single parent, mom: 48%
  - Couch surf or other: 15%
- Coos County:
  - 2-parent, biological parents: 11%
  - 2-parent, step family: 9%
  - Single parent, mom: 9%
  - Couch surf or other: 15%

**Q42 family structure**

- 2-parent, biological parents: 71%
- 2-parent, step family: 15%
- Single parent, mom: 5%
- Couch surf or other: 9%

**Q43 how far parents went in school**

- Graduated from college or more: 72%
- Went to school, don't know how far: 14%
- Did not finish high school: 11%
- Retired: 7%
- Does not have a job: 6%
- Not working now, but looking for a job: 4%

**Q44 Do your parents or guardians work for pay?**

- Yes, one full-time job: 72%
- Yes, one part-time job: 9%
- Yes, multiple jobs: 3%
- Not working now, but looking for a job: 16%
- Does not have a job: 4%
- Retired: 14%
- Don't know or N/A: 2%
Schools in rural communities are critical. They bring families together, support civic interaction, and foster workforce development. Schools also influence youth aspirations for future education. To learn more about these things in Piscataquis and Northern Somerset County schools, we asked students to tell us about their school experience and future goals, what they felt were barriers to those goals, and the extracurricular activities they participated in.

**SCHOOL RESULTS**

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school?

- I like school:
  - Agree: 41%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 27%
  - Disagree: 31%
  - Don't know: 2%

- I get bullied by others at school:
  - Agree: 12%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 27%
  - Disagree: 60%
  - Don't know: 2%

- I am usually bored at school:
  - Agree: 50%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 37%
  - Disagree: 13%

What is the highest level of education that you a) want, and b) expect to complete?

![Chart showing the distribution of educational goals:]
- a) Want: 27% High school, 34% 2-year community college/trade school, 18% 4-year college/university, 13% Graduate, master's, or law program, 23% Ph.D. program or medical school
- b) Expect: 23% High school, 28% 2-year community college/trade school, 18% 4-year college/university, 10% Graduate, master's, or law program, 10% Ph.D. program or medical school

What could prevent you from going as far in school as you would like?

**TOP 5 BARRIERS**

1. It costs too much (34%)
2. I'm not smart enough (24%)
3. I don't have good enough grades (16%)
4. I need to work after school (13%)
5. I'd need to move away to go to school (11%)

Which of the following activities have you participated in the last year?

**TOP 5 ACTIVITIES**

1. Sports team (63%)
2. Community service or volunteering (40%)
3. After-school or summer program (39%)
4. Attend community events (35%)
5. Other school clubs (science/math, computer, debate, foreign language, etc.) (24%)

On average, how many hours per week do you spend participating in all the above activities combined?

- 0 hours: 25%
- 1-2 hours: 17%
- 3-4 hours: 17%
- 5-6 hours: 8%
- 7-9 hours: 8%
- 10 or more hours: 24%
Increasing the number of young people and working families is a critical issue in many rural towns. Natural amenities and attachment to community can retain young people or attract in-migration. We asked students to tell us about their community to better understand what the community has to offer. We also asked them where they want to live in the future to see if there’s an interest in living in these places among young people.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your community:

- This is a good place to grow up: 75% Agree, 20% Neither agree nor disagree, 5% Disagree
- I care about my community: 85% Agree, 13% Neither agree nor disagree, 2% Disagree
- I feel like I am part of my community: 68% Agree, 20% Neither agree nor disagree, 8% Disagree

Where do you see your community in the future in terms of jobs and the economy?

- Forest Hills Consolidated School responses:
  - More jobs & improving economy: 7%
  - Same # of jobs & same economy: 50%
  - Fewer jobs & declining economy: 14%
  - Don’t know: 29%

- All Piscataquis & Northern Somerset County responses:
  - More jobs & improving economy: 13%
  - Same # of jobs & same economy: 28%
  - Fewer jobs & declining economy: 28%
  - Don’t know: 32%

Where do you want to live and expect to live when you are 30 years old?

- Want:
  - Same or nearby town as now: 23%
  - Other rural area in Maine: 19%
  - A city in Maine: 14%
  - Rural area in another state: 12%
  - City in another state: 32%
  - Another country: 7%

- Expect:
  - Same or nearby town as now: 35%
  - Other rural area in Maine: 14%
  - A city in Maine: 13%
  - Rural area in another state: 8%
  - City in another state: 25%
  - Another country: 17%

Do you think the following are important problems facing your community?

- Forest Hills Consolidated School “yes” responses
- All Piscataquis & N. Somerset County “yes” responses

- Not enough things to do in town: 60% Forest Hills, 55% All Piscataquis & N. Somerset
- Lack of public transportation: 50% Forest Hills, 47% All Piscataquis & N. Somerset
- Not enough healthcare or doctors: 58% Forest Hills, 33% All Piscataquis & N. Somerset
- People not having enough money: 46% Forest Hills, 55% All Piscataquis & N. Somerset
- Not enough jobs: 44% Forest Hills, 50% All Piscataquis & N. Somerset
- People moving away: 44% Forest Hills, 42% All Piscataquis & N. Somerset
- Drug or alcohol abuse: 42% Forest Hills, 45% All Piscataquis & N. Somerset
- Not enough affordable or good housing: 30% Forest Hills, 30% All Piscataquis & N. Somerset
- Poor school quality: 23% Forest Hills, 32% All Piscataquis & N. Somerset
- Homelessness: 21% Forest Hills, 16% All Piscataquis & N. Somerset
- Crime: 7% Forest Hills, 17% All Piscataquis & N. Somerset
- Not enough outdoor activities: 7% Forest Hills, 28% All Piscataquis & N. Somerset

**TOP 5 WISHES**

- More indoor recreation (hockey rinks, gyms) (71%)
- More medical care and hospitals (68%)
- More shops and retail stores (63%)
- More restaurants (55%)
- More outdoor recreation (42%)
Youth today are the community’s future labor force. How prepared they feel, and how willing they are to work in local industries, influences their success in the workforce. We asked students to tell us about their career plans, including what barriers they may face and what training support they need. Because the outdoors is so important to our community, we also asked them about outdoor recreation activities that they participated in.

What would be your dream job when you are 30?

For this question, students could type in any answer to the question of what their dream job would be. We wanted to get a sense of their ideal career aspirations. All responses were entered into a program that generated this word cloud, where the larger and darker an entry is, the more times it was mentioned by students. Some students didn’t name a particular job, but described in general what they hoped they’d be doing.

Do you think the following things will prevent you from getting the job you want?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOP 5 BARRIERS</th>
<th>Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree with statements about their attachment to the outdoors (top two):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I don't know the right people (26%)</td>
<td>74% of students said they feel safe in the outdoors here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The job isn't available here (23%)</td>
<td>84% of students said they can be themselves in the outdoors here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I don't have enough money to get the education I need (21%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I'm not smart enough (18%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I don't have enough good grades in school (13%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What sort of help would you like preparing for a job?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOP 5 TRAINING NEEDS</th>
<th>Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree with statements about their attachment to the outdoors (top two):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Training in hands-on skills (65%)</td>
<td>74% of students said they feel safe in the outdoors here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Job advice (53%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Help staying organized (43%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Education or college advice (37%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Help with job applications (31%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Rural Youth Futures project is funded by USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture grant #2017-67023-26240. Project partners include: University of Maine, the University of Oregon’s Ecosystem Workforce Program, Coos Watershed Association (Oregon), the Appalachian Mountain Club (Maine), and Oregon State University. Header photo credit: Mindy Crandall, Oregon State University. For more information on the project, contact Mindy Crandall, Oregon State University, mindy.crandall@oregonstate.edu.