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 Greenville Consolidated School were given a link to an anonymous, electronic survey in February 2019. Participation was voluntary. Greenville Consolidated School had 106 students in these grades during 2018-2019, 94 of which took the survey for a participation rate of 88%. 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](http://ewp.uoregon.edu/RuralYouth).

**Demographics**

Describe the family structure you live with:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Structure</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-parent, biological parents</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-parent, step family</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent, dad</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent, mom</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live with grandparents</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live with foster family</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couch surf or other</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not finish high school</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finished high school</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to school, don't know how far</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated from college or more</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5%</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>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working now, but looking for a job</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, one part-time job</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not have a job</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, multiple jobs</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know or N/A</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gender that you identify as:**

- Female (51%)
- Male (45%)
- Choose not to respond (4%)

**Category that best describes you:**

- Asian (1%)
- Latino/Hispanic (1%)
- Native American (2%)
- White/Caucasian (95%)

**Perception of family finances:**

- More than enough for food & bills (34%)
- Enough for food & bills (31%)
- Not enough for food & bills (13%)
- Don't know/choose not to answer (29%)

**School changes from moving in past 5 years:**

- None (73%)
- Yes (18%)
- No (10%)
- Don’t know (2%)

**Born in Piscataquis or N. Somerset County:**

- Yes (85%)
- No (10%)
- Don’t know (5%)

**Respond (2%):**

- Yes (85%)
- No (10%)
- Don’t know (7%)

- Yes (85%)
- No (10%)
- Don’t know (7%)
SCHOOLS RESULTS

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.

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

- I like school:
  - Agree: 43%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 31%
  - Disagree: 25%
  - Don’t know: 1%

- I get bullied by others at school:
  - Agree: 13%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 30%
  - Disagree: 55%
  - Don’t know: 2%

- I am usually bored at school:
  - Agree: 47%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 39%
  - Disagree: 15%

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a) Want</th>
<th>b) Expect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-year community college/trade school</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year college/university</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate, master’s, or law program</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D. program or medical school</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

- It costs too much (39%)
- I’m not smart enough (16%)
- I don’t have good enough grades (15%)
- I need to work after school (15%)
- I’d need to move away to go to school (15%)

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

- Sports team (73%)
- After-school or summer program (41%)
- Attend community events (40%)
- Community service or volunteering (39%)
- Band or orchestra (38%)

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- I don’t participate in activities (22%)
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:**
  - Agree: 84%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 24%
  - Disagree: 9%
  - Don’t know: 1%

- **I care about my community:**
  - Agree: 87%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 24%
  - Disagree: 11%
  - Don’t know: 9%

- **I feel like I am part of my community:**
  - Agree: 72%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 24%
  - Disagree: 11%
  - Don’t know: 4%

What would you like to see more of in your community?

### TOP 5 WISHES

1. **More indoor recreation (hockey rinks, gyms) (66%)**
2. **More shops and retail stores (56%)**
3. **More restaurants (46%)**
4. **More medical care and hospitals (39%)**
5. **More outdoor recreation (37%)**

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

- **Greenville Consolidated School responses**
  - MORE jobs & improving economy: 7%
  - SAME # of jobs & same economy: 23%
  - FEWER jobs & declining economy: 39%
  - Don’t know: 32%

- **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: 25%
  - Other rural area in Maine: 14%
  - A city in Maine: 11%
  - Rural area in another state: 19%
  - City in another state: 26%

- **Expect**
  - Same or nearby town as now: 26%
  - Other rural area in Maine: 10%
  - A city in Maine: 20%
  - Rural area in another state: 19%
  - City in another state: 29%

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Greenville Consolidated School “yes” responses</th>
<th>All Piscataquis &amp; N. Somerset County “yes” responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not enough things to do in town</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People moving away</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough jobs</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People not having enough money</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public transportation</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug or alcohol abuse</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough affordable or good housing</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough healthcare or doctors</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough outdoor activities</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor school quality</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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?

TOP 5 BARRIERS

I don't know the right people (28%)
The job isn't available here (23%)
There aren't enough jobs in that field (18%)
I don't have enough money to get the education I need (18%)
I don't have the necessary skills (16%)

Which of the following outdoor recreation activites have you done in the last year? (top ten):

Canoeing or kayaking 70%
Fishing/ice fishing 67%
Hiking 66%
Visiting the beach 63%
Camping 63%
Skiing or snowboarding 60%
Hunting 47%
Snowmobiling 41%
Wildlife viewing 41%
ATV riding 40%

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

TOP 5 TRAINING NEEDS

Training in hands-on skills (53%)
Education or college advice (51%)
Job advice (36%)
Help with job applications (35%)
Interviewing skills (31%)

Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree with statements about their attachment to the outdoors (top two):

88% of students said they can be themselves in the outdoors here
81% of students said they feel safe in the outdoors here