RURAL YOUTH FUTURES: PENQUIS VALLEY 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 Penquis Valley School were given a link to an anonymous, electronic survey in February 2019. Participation was voluntary. Penquis Valley School had 130 students in these grades during 2018-2019, 103 of which took the survey for a participation rate of 79%. 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></th>
<th>43%</th>
<th>23%</th>
<th>9%</th>
<th>4%</th>
<th>2%</th>
<th>16%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-parent, biological parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-parent, step family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent, mom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent, dad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Mom, dad, or guardian:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did not finish high school</th>
<th>24%</th>
<th>28%</th>
<th>4%</th>
<th>18%</th>
<th>4%</th>
<th>22%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduated from college or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to school, don’t know how far</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to college, didn’t graduate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know or N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second mom, dad, or guardian:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did not finish high school</th>
<th>16%</th>
<th>22%</th>
<th>12%</th>
<th>4%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>27%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduated from college or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to school, don’t know how far</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to college, didn’t graduate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know or N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do your parents or guardians work for pay?

Mom, dad, or guardian:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, one full-time job</th>
<th>64%</th>
<th>9%</th>
<th>4%</th>
<th>5%</th>
<th>6%</th>
<th>11%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not working now, but looking for a job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, one part-time job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not have a job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know or N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second mom, dad, or guardian:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, one full-time job</th>
<th>35%</th>
<th>13%</th>
<th>8%</th>
<th>8%</th>
<th>17%</th>
<th>17%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not working now, but looking for a job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, one part-time job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not have a job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know or N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SCHOOL 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.

TOP 5 BARRIERS

- **It costs too much (38%)**
- **I’m not smart enough (25%)**
- **I need to work after school (24%)**
- **I don’t have good enough grades (17%)**
- **I’d need to move away to go to school (8%)**

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

- **a) Want**
  - High school: 28%
  - 2-year community college/trade school: 10%
  - 4-year college/university: 13%
  - Graduate, master’s, or law program: 24%
  - Ph.D. program or medical school: 23%

- **b) Expect**
  - High school: 23%
  - 2-year community college/trade school: 14%
  - 4-year college/university: 13%
  - Graduate, master’s, or law program: 17%
  - Ph.D. program or medical school: 22%

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

- **It costs too much (38%)**
- **I need to work after school (24%)**
- **I’m not smart enough (25%)**
- **I don’t have good enough grades (17%)**
- **I’d need to move away to go to school (8%)**

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

- **Community service or volunteering (37%)**
- **Sports team (29%)**
- **Band or orchestra (24%)**
- **After-school or summer program (22%)**
- **Attend community events (22%)**

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 hours</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hours</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 hours</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6 hours</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9 hours</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 or more hours</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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: 42%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 30%
  - Disagree: 27%
  - Don’t know: 1%

- I care about my community:
  - Agree: 63%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 25%
  - Disagree: 10%
  - Don’t know: 2%

- I feel like I am part of my community:
  - Agree: 46%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 32%
  - Disagree: 17%
  - Don’t know: 5%

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

- Penquis Valley School responses:
  - MORE jobs & improving economy: 18%
  - SAME # of jobs & same economy: 30%
  - FEWER jobs & declining economy: 18%
  - Don’t know: 33%

- All Piscataquis & Northern Somerset County responses:
  - SAME # of jobs & same economy: 15%
  - FEWER jobs & declining economy: 28%
  - MORE jobs & improving 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: 33%
  - Other rural area in Maine: 13%
  - Rural area in another state: 16%
  - City in another state: 16%
  - Another country: 9%

- EXPECT:
  - Same or nearby town as now: 23%
  - Somewhere else rural (not in a city) Oregon: 13%
  - City in Oregon: 25%
  - Rural area in another state: 8%
  - City in another state: 20%
  - Another country: 5%

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Penquis Valley School &quot;yes&quot; responses</th>
<th>All Piscataquis &amp; N. Somerset County &quot;yes&quot; responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People not having enough money</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug or alcohol abuse</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough things to do in town</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough jobs</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor school quality</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People moving away</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public transportation</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough outdoor activities</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough affordable or good housing</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough healthcare or doctors</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOP 5 WISHES

1. **More indoor recreation (hockey rinks, gyms) (51%)**
2. **More outdoor recreation (49%)**
3. **More shops and retail stores (48%)**
4. **More restaurants (48%)**
5. **More medical care and hospitals (41%)**
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 have enough money to get the education I need (30%)
- I don’t know the right people (23%)
- I don’t have the necessary skills (17%)
- I’m not smart enough (17%)
- I don’t have enough good grades in school (13%)

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

- Fishing/ice fishing 52%
- Visiting the beach 50%
- Camping 46%
- ATV riding 45%
- Hiking 45%
- Canoeing or kayaking 38%
- Snowmobiling 32%
- Wildlife viewing 30%
- Hunting 24%
- Mountain biking 16%

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

TOP 5 TRAINING NEEDS

- Training in hands-on skills (43%)
- Job advice (36%)
- Education or college advice (31%)
- Help with job applications (23%)
- Help staying organized (22%)

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

- 59% of students say they can be themselves in the outdoors here
- 44% of students say the outdoors here is the best place to do the things they enjoy