RURAL YOUTH FUTURES: SEDOMOCHA MIDDLE 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.

APPRAOCH
With permission from the school principal, students in grades 6–8 in SeDoMoCha Middle School were given a link to an anonymous, electronic survey in February 2019. Participation was voluntary. SeDoMoCha Middle School had 242 students during 2018-2019, 199 of which took the survey for a participation rate of 82%. Every question was optional, so the number of responses varies by question; middle schoolers had fewer questions to answer. 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:

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

Do your parents or guardians work for pay?

Gender that you identify as:

Perception of family finances:

Category that best describes you:

School changes from moving in past 5 years:

Born in Piscataquis or N. Somerset County:

More than enough for food & bills (30%)

Enough for food & bills (29%)

Not enough for food & bills (29%)

Don't know/choose not to respond (34%)

Asian (1%)

Black/African American (2%)

Latino/Hispanic (1%)

Native American (7%)

Two or more races/ethnicities (11%)

White/Caucasian (78%)

Female (49%)

Male (49%)

None of these (1%)

Trans (1%)

Choose not to respond (9%)

More than enough

Enough for food & bills

Not enough for food & bills

Couch surf or other

Don't know or NA

Retired

Does not have a job

Not working now, but looking for a job

Did not finish high school

Graduated from college or more

Went to school, don't know how far

Went to college, didn't graduate

Don't know or NA

1 (26%)

2 (39%)

3 or more (11%)

1 (26%)

None (80%)

No (91%)

Yes (89%)

11% 34% 6% 6% 3% 34%
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: 44%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 17%
  - Disagree: 38%
  - Don’t know: 1%

- **I get bullied by others at school:**
  - Agree: 13%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 17%
  - Disagree: 69%
  - Don’t know: 1%

- **I am usually bored at school:**
  - Agree: 51%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 25%
  - Disagree: 24%
  - Don’t know: 1%

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

- **a) Want**
  - High school: 17%
  - 2-year community college/trade school: 35%
  - 4-year college/university: 32%
  - Graduate, master’s, or law program: 14%
  - Ph.D. program or medical school: 14%

- **b) Expect**
  - High school: 17%
  - 2-year community college/trade school: 69%
  - 4-year college/university: 14%
  - Graduate, master’s, or law program: 14%
  - Ph.D. program or medical school: 14%

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

- **It costs too much (27%)**
- **I’m not smart enough (18%)**
- **I don’t have good enough grades (17%)**
- **I’d need to move away to go to school (14%)**
- **I need to work after school (14%)**

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

- **Top 5 Activities**
  - Sports team (60%)
  - Band or orchestra (41%)
  - After-school or summer program (28%)
  - Attend community events (21%)
  - Other school clubs (science/math, computer, debate, foreign language, etc.) (21%)

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

- 0 hours: 12%
- 1-2 hours: 28%
- 3-4 hours: 20%
- 5-6 hours: 16%
- 7-9 hours: 12%
- 10 or more hours: 12%
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:** 79%
- **Neither agree nor disagree:** 14%
- **Disagree:** 5%
- **Don’t know:** 6%

**I care about my community:**
- **Agree:** 81%
- **Neither agree nor disagree:** 12%
- **Disagree:** 5%
- **Don’t know:** 3%

**I feel like I am part of my community:**
- **Agree:** 63%
- **Neither agree nor disagree:** 21%
- **Disagree:** 12%
- **Don’t know:** 4%

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

**Want**
- **Same or nearby town as now:** 34%
- **Another country:** 7%
- **City in another state:** 26%
- **Rural area in another state:** 9%
- **A city in Maine:** 17%

**Expect**
- **Same or nearby town as now:** 17%
- **Another country:** 15%
- **City in another state:** 38%
- **Rural area in another state:** 15%
- **A city in Maine:** 17%

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

**TOP 5 WISHES**

- **More indoor recreation (hockey rinks, gyms) (63%)**
- **More restaurants (62%)**
- **More shops and retail stores (60%)**
- **More outdoor recreation (49%)**
- **More medical care and hospitals (39%)**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>SeDoMoCha Middle 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>42%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public transportation</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People not having enough money</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough jobs</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug or alcohol abuse</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough outdoor activities</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People moving away</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough healthcare or doctors</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough affordable or good housing</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor school quality</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>14%</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?

- I don't have enough money to get the education I need (21%)
- I don't know the right people (10%)
- I don't have the necessary skills (9%)
- I'm not smart enough (9%)
- There aren't enough jobs in that field (9%)

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

- Training in hands-on skills (26%)
- Education or college advice (26%)
- Job advice (21%)
- Apprenticeships or internship opportunities (17%)
- Help staying organized (15%)

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

- Visiting the beach: 59%
- Fishing/ice fishing: 53%
- Camping: 52%
- ATV riding: 48%
- Canoeing or kayaking: 48%
- Hiking: 45%
- Snowmobiling: 43%
- Hunting: 41%
- Snowshoeing: 33%
- Wildlife viewing: 29%

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

- 77% of students said they can be themselves in the outdoors here
- 57% of students said they feel safe in the outdoors here