

Rural Crime 01/02

England and Wales

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MAIN POINTS

This report looks at the levels of crime and people's fear of crime in rural areas, derived from government statistics. It confirms that rural areas continue to experience lower levels of crime than those in urban areas. Furthermore, rural areas appear to have benefited from the same sorts of reductions in crime that have been witnessed nationally in recent years.

However, although in no way reaching the levels experienced in our towns and cities, it is apparent that rural areas did experience a sharper rise in crime than seen elsewhere in the late 1980s through to the mid-1990s. This finding may help to explain why crime has become more prominent in the agenda of rural concerns.

Key findings:

- Less than 3 per cent of people living in rural areas became victims of burglary and a similar proportion were victims of violent crime in 1999, compared to almost 5 per cent for both crimes in non-rural areas.
- Levels of burglary, vehicle-related thefts and violence in rural areas have been consistently lower than in non-rural areas over the past two decades.
- The number of burglaries rose more in rural areas over the past two decades compared to both suburban and urban areas.
- Burglary rates in rural areas are now around three times the rate recorded in 1983, whereas in other areas burglary rates have receded to the level of the mid-1980s.
- However, people living in rural areas remain more positive about crime levels, their own risks of victimisation and the performance of their local police than do their non-rural counterparts.

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Home Office (nor do they reflect government policy).

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1. Preface

The level of crime is an issue of concern to many people across the country. However, in recent years the spotlight has been turned on rural crime, partly as a result of the Tony Martin case.¹ Many people in rural areas believe (and the media report) that crime rates are rising, and that the rural community is no longer the safe idyll it has previously seemed. To some people, it appears that the problems previously associated with urban areas have spread to the countryside, and there is also an increasing awareness of specifically rural problems relating to crime and disorder.

This report looks at the levels of crime and people's fear of crime in rural areas, derived from key government statistics. It confirms the findings of previous studies in suggesting that rural areas continue to experience lower levels of crime and people living in rural areas are victimised less frequently than those in urban areas. Furthermore, rural areas appear to have benefited from the same sorts of reductions in crime that have been witnessed nation-wide in recent years. Those who live in rural areas will hopefully find these facts reassuring.

However, the contents of this report also offer a new explanation as to why crime may have become more prominent in the agenda of rural concerns in recent years. Although in no way reaching the levels experienced in our towns and cities, it is apparent that rural areas did experience a sharper rise in crime than seen elsewhere in the late 1980s through to the mid-1990s. It is therefore not surprising that people in rural areas perceived over that period a change in their idyllic environment once relatively undisturbed by crime.

The good news is that for vehicle-related crime and violent crime, this appears to have been a short-term change that has now receded. Burglary levels in rural areas appear to have remained higher than in the early 1980's, but rural areas have benefited from the same reductions in burglary that other parts of the country have also seen over recent years, and the risk of being burgled remains considerably lower than in urban and even suburban England and Wales.

The Home Office has produced a 'toolkit' on rural crime (available on the crime reduction website: www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits.htm). The toolkits bring together information on the latest developments, research and promising approaches. Each toolkit is designed to help partners identify problems, develop responses and monitor progress. Each will also highlight practical measures to make communities safer. In 2000 NACRO published a briefing paper on community safety in rural areas.² This paper discussed how community safety practice, devised primarily for high crime urban areas, might be adapted to meet the needs of rural areas, noting that whilst rural areas suffer fewer crimes, the nature of rural crime is often significantly different from urban crime, even if the actual offence is the same. Rural areas also suffer rural-specific crimes, for example agricultural and livestock thefts. Vulnerability arising from their isolation, including longer police response time should help be required, are also particular concerns in rural areas.

The Countryside Agency has developed a set of 20 'thematic indicators', which compliment the 15 set out in the Governments Rural White Paper, together they help to monitor the changing state of the countryside. The most recent 'State of the Countryside' report notes that rural residents enjoy better health, higher levels of educational attainment and employment, lower

1. Farmer Tony Martin was jailed for murder in April 2000 after shooting dead an intruder in his farmhouse. In October 2001 the sentence was reduced from murder to manslaughter.

2. Lawtey, A. and Deane, M. (2000).

levels of crime and higher incomes than their urban counterparts.³ However, the report also highlights changes that may be having a detrimental impact on rural areas. The estimated total income from farming in 2000 fell to its lowest level in 25 years, and 2001 estimates may be even more bleak. The growth of the population in some rural areas, with newcomers often younger and more affluent than the long-term residents, can also affect the equilibrium of the countryside. Increasing house prices in rural commuter areas conceal pockets of deprivation in more remote areas where residents maybe on lower incomes and suffering poorer health.

The official statistics presented in this report cannot provide comprehensive coverage of all the issues that an investigation into rural crime might warrant, nor can they offer explanations for some of the changes described and their impact on crime. The British Crime Survey data is unable to contrast different rural areas or compare experience within a particular area. The data recorded by the police can identify variations between some local areas but they too only provide a one-dimensional view of crime. Additional detail on the nature of crimes is not yet collected in a consistent way across different police forces, and hence information on the impact of crime on victims, what was stolen and by what methods is not readily available. Such information might reveal significant differences between urban and rural crimes, as well as providing necessary information to help local communities to respond to their crime problems, both through their police force and with other agencies.

Although rural areas remain considerably less blighted by crime than our towns and cities, it is important to recognise that they still suffer from crime and disorder and are in no way crime-free. Statistics can only provide a snapshot of those problems. We hope that by providing the information in this report we have given rural communities a clearer basis on which to understand the problems that they are seeking to address.

3. Countryside Agency (2001).

2. Sources of data and definitions

Most people have an idea in their own mind of what a rural area might be. However, many areas that might be considered rural can have significant town centres within them and consequently likely to experience many of the social problems of urban areas. There does not currently exist a unique definition of a rural area and no single measure of rurality is likely to have absolute validity.¹

In this report two sources of national crime data have been used – police recorded crime data and British Crime Survey data; each has their own specific definitions of rurality. Whilst in isolation each definition has its limitations, together, they can provide a more balanced overview of crime in rural areas.

The British Crime Survey

The British Crime Survey (BCS) is a regular survey run by the Home Office, asking people aged sixteen and above, living in private households in England and Wales about their experiences of crime.² As a survey of households, the BCS cannot provide information about crimes experienced by people living in an institutional setting, nor about crimes against businesses. However, for household and personal crime it is regarded as one of the best available measures.

Identifying those households covered by the BCS that are in rural areas is not straightforward. There is no generally agreed definition of what constitutes a rural area, and although clearly some areas and some households are more rural than others, it is not easy to construct a clear boundary between rural and non-rural areas. The BCS uses the standard ACORN classification of areas.³ Of the 54 ACORN typologies, ten have been included in the standard BCS definition of rural. On this basis, a quarter of households can be defined as living in a rural area.

However, this definition does include some areas that could be viewed as suburban. It is possible to construct a more narrow definition of rural areas, although the numbers of people interviewed in these areas in past sweeps of the survey have been too small to permit as reliable analysis of levels of crime as that which is possible for the broader definition. Analysis on the more restricted basis indicates no significant difference to the pattern amongst the broader rural grouping. Unless otherwise stated, all of the BCS data using ACORN is based on the broader classification.

An alternative classification of rural areas available to the BCS is that supplied by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The ONS classification breaks areas up into rural, suburban and urban. This method identifies a fifth of the population as living in rural areas. Whilst this classification has a slightly stricter definition of rural, it has the drawback of a smaller sample size than that achieved using the broader ACORN classification which consequently reduces the reliability of the results.⁴ This said, the ONS rural category is still likely to include within it areas that may be more appropriately deemed non-rural.

1. Whilst this report is being written, the Countryside Agency is collaborating with the DTLR, DEFRA and ONS to develop a set of definitions that will gain wide acceptance.

2. For information on the BCS methodology, see Hales et al (2000) and Home Office Statistical Bulletin 18/01.

3. For information on ACORN, including the list of typologies classified as rural see Appendix B.

4. Further information on the ONS classification of areas; including the full list of typologies see Hales et al (2000).

Police Recorded Statistics at Force and Local Authority Level

The Home Office also collects statistics on a wide range of crimes recorded by police forces. Care has to be taken when examining this data over time as it will be affected by any changes that occur in reporting or recording practices, for example, in 1998 changes to the counting rules saw the incidence of violent crime more than double.⁵

Figures provided by the Department for Transport, Local government and the Regions (DTLR) based on the 1991 Census show the proportion of the population that live in urban areas. From this information police force areas (PFA's) were grouped into 5 bands of relative population density. Using this method, of the 43 PFA's, 4 were classified as 'most rural', 9 as 'less rural', 14 as 'middling', 11 as 'more urban' and 5 as 'most urban'. The four 'most rural' PFA's are: Dyfed-Powys, Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire, and North Wales. A list of all the police forces in each of the population density bands is provided in Appendix B.

Since 1999 the same police data for 6 key crime categories has also been collected for the 376 Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs).⁶ These CDRPs (which equate to local authority boundaries) were also grouped according to their population density into 6 *density bands*, with 1 representing 'least dense' areas (most rural) and 6 representing 'most dense' areas (most urban). Using this method, from the 376 CDRP's, 4 fall into the density group 1, 55 in group 2, 75 in group 3, 75 in group 4, 52 in group 5 and 115 in the most densely populated group 6. Given the small number of CDRP's that fall into density group 1, it was considered more robust to take density groups 1 and 2 as being those CDRPs that are predominantly rural, making up 16 per cent of all CDRPs, covering 9 per cent of the population of England and Wales. A list of the local authorities in groups 1 and 2 is provided in Appendix B.

Both of these methods for classifying areas are based on population density. As mentioned, some forces deemed rural will have more urban areas within them. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume that those police forces or partnerships with particularly low overall population densities are more rural than those with higher densities.

5. For more information see Home Office Statistical Bulletin 12/01.

6. The 6 main crime categories are: Theft of a vehicle, theft from a vehicle, burglary, robbery, violence against the person, and sexual offences. For more information on recorded crime statistics, see Home Office Statistical Bulletin 12/01.

3. The extent of crime

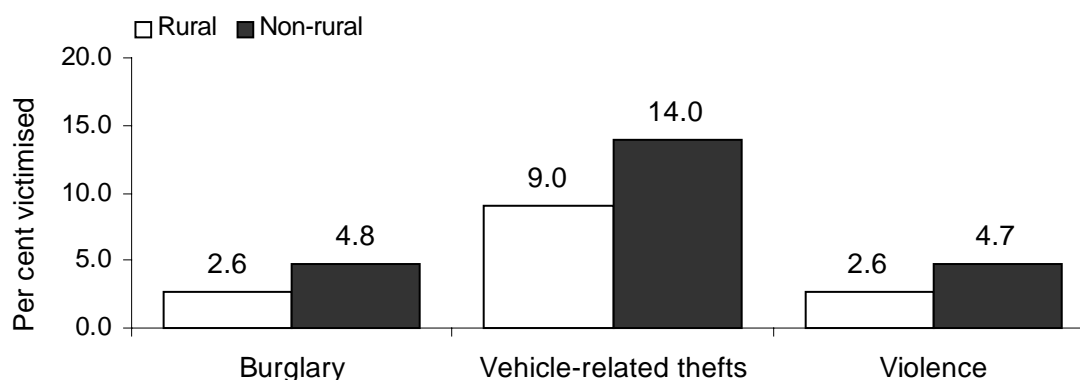
This section uses data from both the BCS and police recorded statistics to assess the extent of crime in rural and non-rural areas in 1999/2000. This is then followed by a brief look at the prevalence of repeat victimisation, and how this varies in different areas according to the BCS.

The extent of rural crime

Figures from the 2000 BCS show that for the three main crime types, the prevalence of crime, i.e. the proportion of people who fell victim once or more in 1999 is significantly lower in rural areas than in non-rural areas. This is true, and statistically significant, using both the broader and narrower definitions of rural.¹

Using the broader ACORN classification of area type the 2000 BCS estimates that the prevalence of burglary in rural areas in 1999 was 2.6 per cent, significantly lower than the non-rural estimate of 4.8 per cent. For violent crime, the figures were similar, 2.6 per cent fell victim once or more in rural areas, compared to 4.7 per cent in non-rural areas, again a statistically significant difference. Figures for vehicle-related thefts were higher overall, but people living in rural areas were significantly less likely to experience such crimes than those living in non-rural areas, 9.0 per cent compared to 14.0 per cent respectively (Figure 3.1).²

Figure 3.1 Victims of crime once or more in 1999 by area type (2000 BCS)



Using the same data and area type classification to estimate the actual number of incidents i.e. taking into account any multiple victimisation, the same pattern emerges; that for the three main crime types the number of crime incidences in 1999 was significantly lower in rural areas than in non-rural areas (Figure 3.2). Again this is true, and statistically significant, using both the broad and narrow definitions of rural.³

It is estimated that in 1999 there were almost double the number of incidents of burglary per 10,000 households in non-rural areas than in rural areas, 662 to 343 respectively. Again a similar pattern emerges when looking at violent crime, with an estimated 876 incidence per 10,000 adults in non-rural areas, compared to 462 in rural areas. Vehicle-related thefts were also estimated to

1. See Appendix Table A3.1 for estimates and significance using both the broad and narrow classifications of rural.

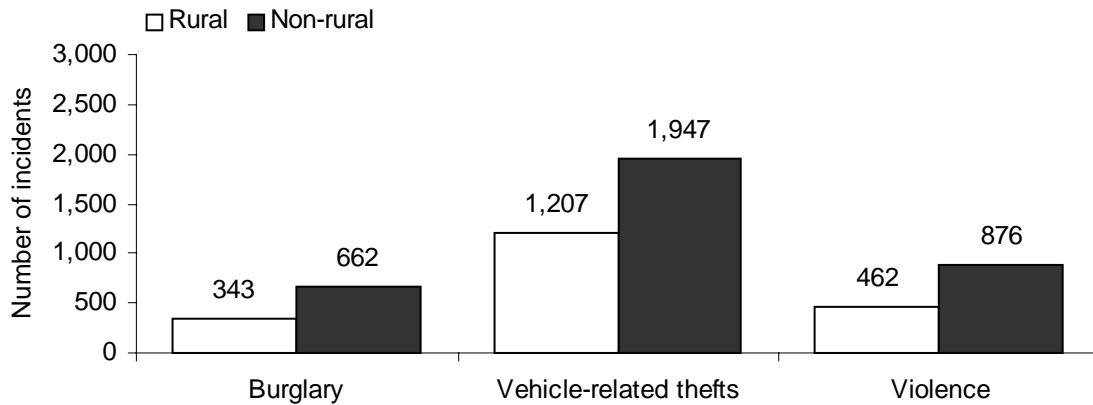
2. Using a two-tailed significance test, the differences were all significant at the 5% level.

3. See Appendix Table A3.2 for estimates and significance using both the broad and narrow classifications of rural.

Rural crime in England and Wales

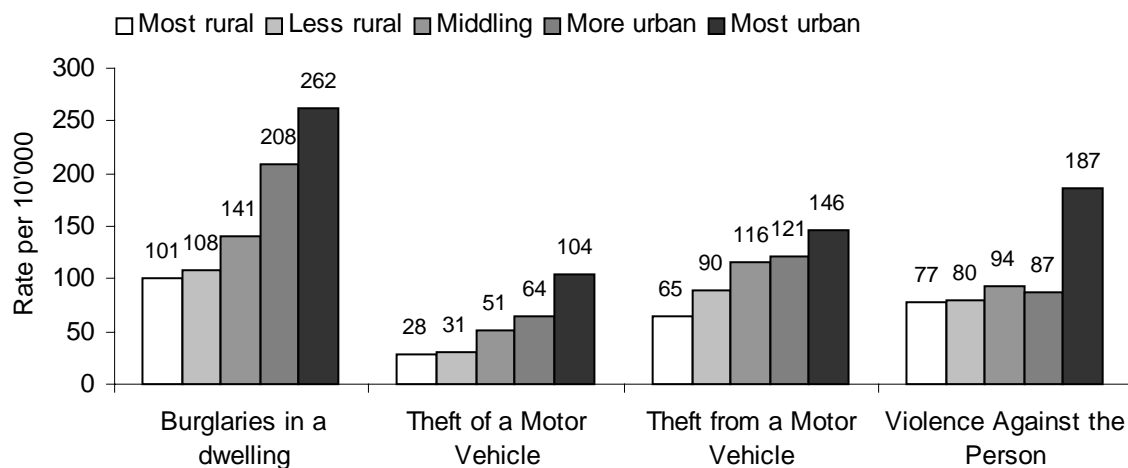
be significantly higher in non-rural areas, 1,947 incidences per 10,000 vehicle-owning households compared to 1,207 in rural areas.⁴

Figure 3.2 Number of incidents of crime per 10,000 population by area type (2000 BCS)



Looking at the recorded crime data, a similar picture emerges. Figure 3.3 shows that across the major crime types, the number of crimes per 10,000 population in rural areas in the financial year of 2000/1 was considerably lower than in urban areas. Incidence of violent crime and vehicle crime is per 10,000 population; burglary is per 10,000 households.

Figure 3.3 Recorded crime rates per 10,000 population by area type (2000/1)



From the police data it is also possible to analyse the crime rates in individual local authority (CDRP) areas. Plotting the crime rate in each CDRP against their population density, the relationship between these two factors is clearly visible. Taking the rate of burglary, vehicle thefts and violent offences, it can be seen that high population density is correlated with high crime.

4. The differences in incidence rate for burglary, violence and vehicle-related thefts for rural and non-rural areas were all statistically significant. Using a two-tailed significance test, the differences were all significant at the 5% level.

Whilst there is some variation, all show a positive correlation; the higher the population density of an area, the higher the crime rate.

Figure 3.4 Recorded burglary rate by population density in each CDRP (2000/1)

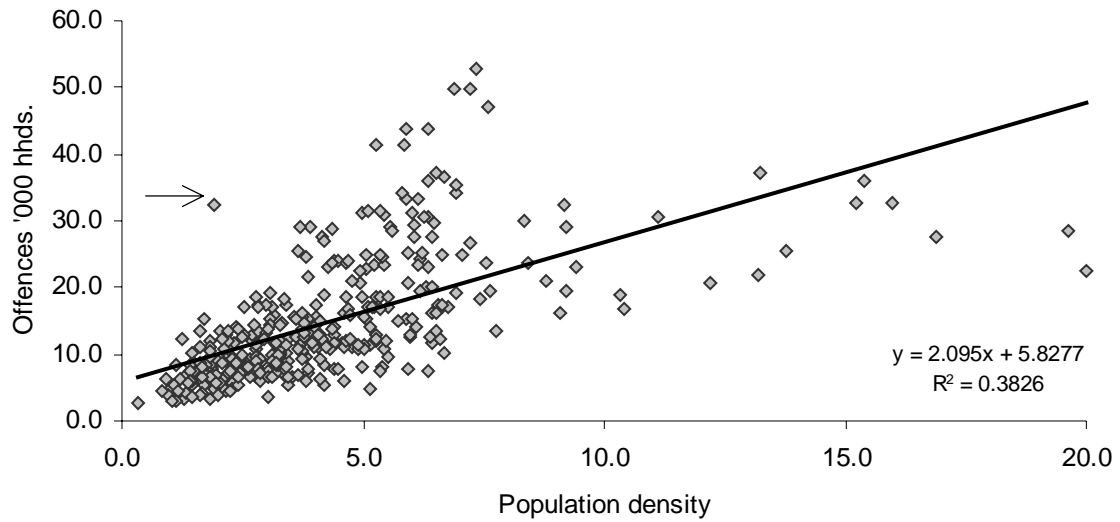


Figure 3.5 Recorded vehicle thefts by population density in each CDRP (2000/1)

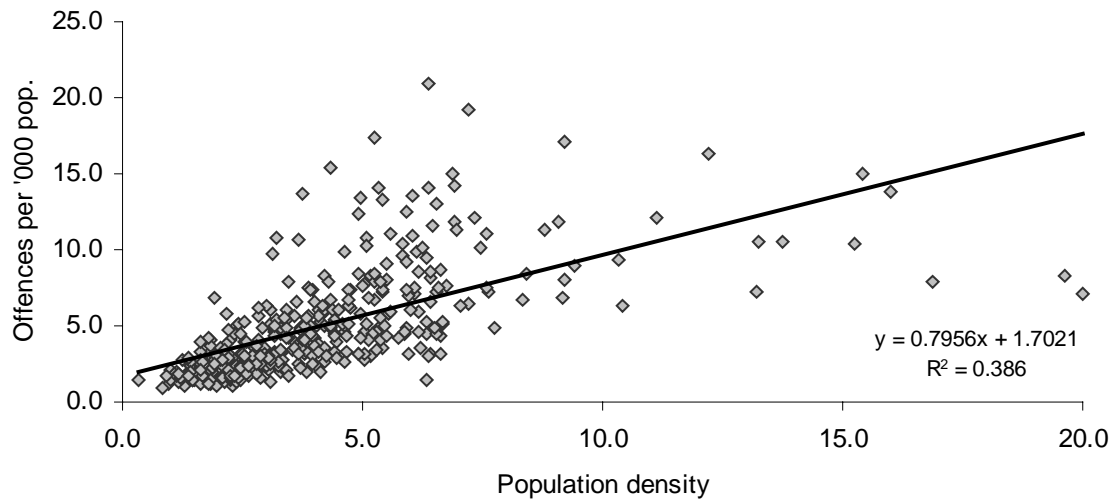
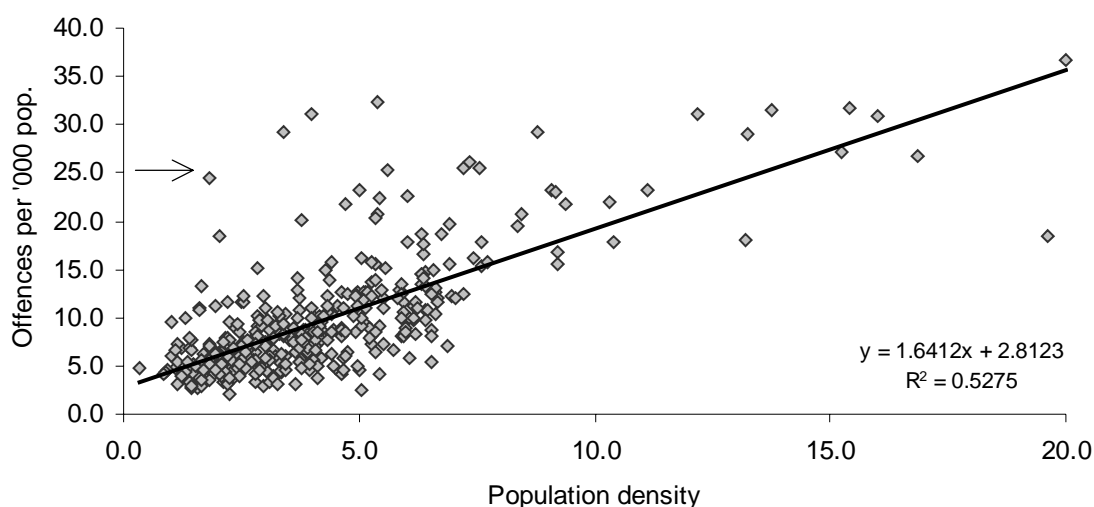


Figure 3.6 Recorded violent offences by population density in each CDRP (2000/1)



There are a few obvious outliers visible in these charts (two of which are highlighted by arrows in Figures 3.4 and 3.6). Some local authority areas experience high crime rates although their overall population density is comparatively low. The arrow in Figure 3.4 points to the CDRP of South Bucks in the Thames Valley police force area. With a population density of 1.9 this CDRP falls into the second most rural band, but it has a burglary rate of 32.3 per 1,000 population, on a par with many more urban areas. Although sparsely populated, it is an area that many people would not think of as typically rural. The arrow in Figure 3.6 points to the CDRP of Torfaen in the police force area of Gwent. With a population density of 1.8 this CDRP again falls into the second most rural band. Its high violent crime rate may be due to local factors, and rates of recorded violent crime in particular will be affected by local policing initiatives and may not always reflect the experiences of local people.

Repeat victimisation

Whilst incidence rates take into account multiple victimisation, they do not allow any estimate to be made of the extent to which people living in rural areas are subject to repeated criminal acts.

The 2000 BCS estimates that rural residents were significantly less likely to fall victim to household crime more than once in 1999.⁵ Twenty-nine per cent of victims in rural areas experienced more than one incident, compared to 38 per cent in non-rural areas. Repeat victimisation of vehicle-related crime in 1999 was also significantly less common in rural areas than in non-rural areas (25% compared to 35%).⁶ However, the 2000 BCS estimates that living in an urban or rural area has no affect on the likelihood of victims of violent offences experiencing more than one incident. Although figures are slightly higher for non-rural residents compared to rural residents (47% and 45% respectively), this difference fails to be statistically significant.

5. See Home Office Statistical Bulletin 18/01 for more in formation on offence classification.

6. Using a two-tailed significance test, these differences were all significant at the 5% level.

4. Trends in crime

Using both the British Crime Survey and police recorded crime statistics it has been shown that crime is lower in rural areas, than in non-rural areas. This also remains true when looking at trends over time.

This section takes a detailed look at trends across the three main crime types. Using data from the BCS, trends using the ACORN classification of area type are presented first, showing the change in crime rates since the beginning of the 1990's. Following this are trends since the early 1980's, again based on BCS data, but using the narrower ONS definition of rural areas. This section then concludes with a look at the trend in crime, again from the early 1980's, in the four most rural forces, using the data recorded by the police.

Trends in rural crime

Using the ACORN classification of area the BCS shows that for all of the main crime types, crime has been consistently lower in rural area than in non-rural areas. The charts below give the number of incidents per 10,000 adults/households from 1991 to 1999 for burglary (Figure 4.1), vehicle thefts (Figure 4.2) and for the categories of violence recorded in the BCS (Figure 4.3).¹ Although the BCS sample for the first results of the 2001 BCS was not sufficient to allow a rural/non-rural comparison, national crime trends have continued to decrease.²

As well as the number of incidents of crime being consistently lower throughout consecutive sweeps of the BCS, rural trends in crime also largely follow the same patterns of increase and subsequent decline as witnessed by non-rural areas. One small exception was the incidence of vehicle thefts between 1993 and 1995, where rural areas marginally increased and non-rural areas decreased (although the difference is small). Also, whilst the number of violent incidents in both rural and non-rural areas have declined since 1995, in non-rural areas this largely took place between 1995 and 1997, whereas for rural areas this happened later – between 1997 and 1999.

1. Whilst sweeps prior to 1992 had ACORN on the data set, ACORN is constructed using census data. In addition to the changes this makes, there was also changes made to the methodology of constructing the ACORN groups in 1992. The two different methods are not comparable in their classification of rural areas, thus trends cannot be provided prior to 1992. See Appendix B for more information.

2. For more information on these changes see Home Office Statistical Bulletin 18/01.

Figure 4.1 Trend in number of burglaries per 10,000 households by area type (BCS)

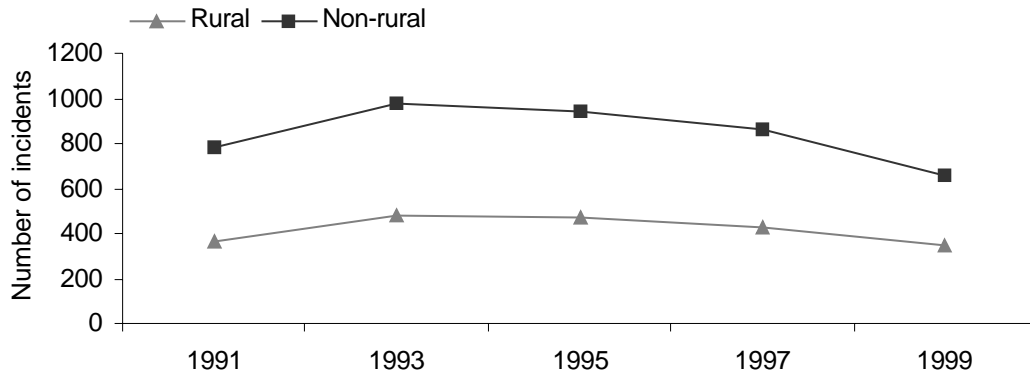


Figure 4.2 Trend in number of vehicle thefts per 10,000 vehicle-owning households by area type (BCS)

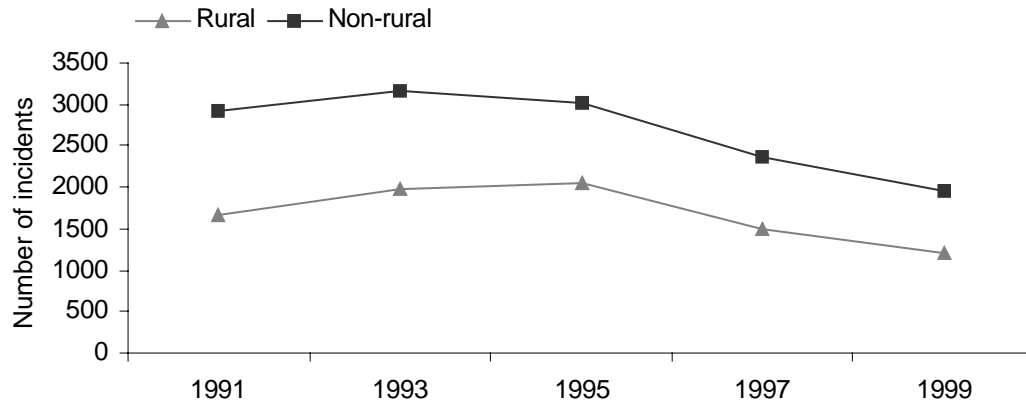
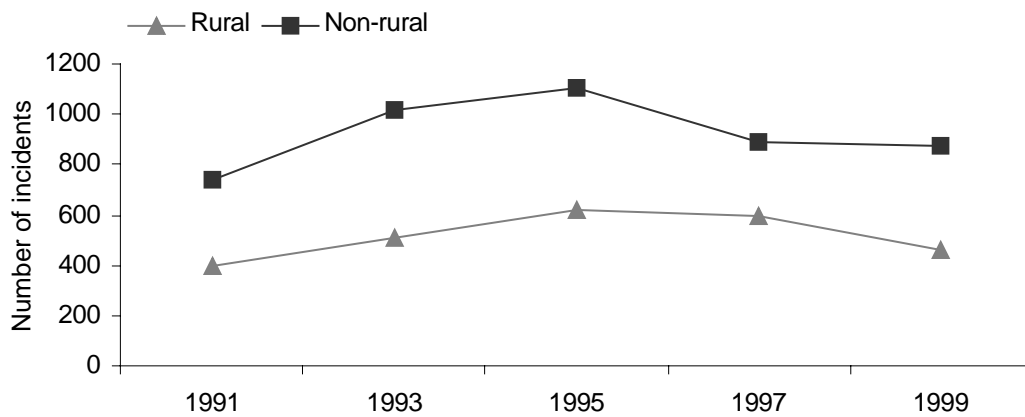


Figure 4.3 Trend in number of violent incidents per 10,000 adults by area type (BCS)



If we reclassify the same data according to the more restrictive ONS definition of area we see a slightly different picture. It must be remembered that using the ONS classification will result in different patterns of crime being presented than those seen in the preceding charts. This is due to many of the areas classified as rural under the ACORN classification falling into the ONS suburban area type and conversely many of the areas deemed urban under the ACORN classification also becoming suburban under the ONS definition.

The ONS definition of area type results in a fifth of the entire BCS sample falling into the rural category. The smaller number of cases means that care must be taken when interpreting the figures for rural areas, and conclusions drawn must be treated as indicative rather than conclusive. This is a particular problem when looking at rarer offences such as violence, when changes in incidence may be the result of sampling variation.

The ONS classification again suggests that rural areas experience less crime than urban areas. This is consistent across consecutive sweeps of the BCS and for all the main crime groups. It is also consistent with the pattern shown using ACORN based analysis and in the police statistics. However, although the pattern is similar, when looking at the trend data based on the more restrictive ONS classification of ruralness some important differences emerge.

Table 4.1 shows that in urban, suburban and rural areas burglary has followed the same pattern - increasing until the mid 1990's followed by subsequent decline. The main distinctive features of this trend are firstly, that burglary in rural areas in 1983 was very low. Also in rural areas burglary appears to have continued to increase for longer, reaching a peak after both urban and suburban areas. Also between 1993 and 1995 there was a significant increase in burglary in rural areas.³ However, rural areas have consistently experienced significantly fewer incidences of burglary than urban areas.⁴ Also excluding 1995 rural areas have also suffered less incidents than suburban areas, however, throughout the 1990s these differences fail to be statistically significant.

Table 4.1 Incidents of burglary per 10,000 households by area type (BCS)

	Urban	Suburban	Rural	England and Wales
1983	662	422	123	492
1987	834	442	278	612
1991	1005	464	358	678
1993	1255	577	394	855
1995	1127	563	602	829
1997	1062	517	388	756
1999	782	453	378	585

Vehicle-related thefts reveal a similar pattern to that of burglary. Table 4.2 shows that all area types experienced an increase in the incidence of vehicle-related thefts until the early to mid 1990's, followed by a continuing decline. Urban areas reached a peak in 1993, whilst suburban areas remained relatively stable throughout the early 1990's. Rural areas continued to increase

3. Using a two-tailed significance test, the increase is significant at the 5% level.

4. The lower incidents of burglary in rural areas compared to urban areas are all significant at the 5% level, using a two-tailed significance test.

Rural crime in England and Wales

until peaking in 1995, when there was then a sharp fall. Again, rural areas have consistently experienced a lower incidence of vehicle-related thefts than both urban and to a lesser extent suburban areas.

Table 4.2 Incidents of vehicle-related thefts per 10,000 vehicle-owning households by area type (BCS)

	Urban	Suburban	Rural	England and Wales
1983	2049	1463	1068	1655
1987	2622	1906	1437	2129
1991	3366	2224	1648	2541
1993	3831	2244	1865	2815
1995	3452	2310	2145	2747
1997	2714	1815	1462	2122
1999	2202	1532	1251	1741

The violent crime picture is less clear-cut. Table 4.3 shows that the incidence of violent crime continued to increase in each of these three area types until the mid 1990's. However, in contrast to both burglary and vehicle-related thefts, rural violent incidents peaked two-years earlier than both urban and sub-urban areas. The late 1980's saw a sharp rise in violent crime in rural areas. In both 1991 and 1993 the rate of violence in rural areas was higher than rates in suburban areas and only very marginally lower than those in urban areas. However, since its peak in 1993, rural areas experienced a sharp decline in violent crime in 1995, and have since then remained at around the same level in the following three sweeps of the survey.⁵

Table 4.3 Incidents of violent crime per 10,000 adults by area type (BCS)

	Urban	Suburban	Rural	England and Wales
1983	631	470	327	527
1987	726	476	301	570
1991	709	567	694	651
1993	927	832	907	888
1995	1190	961	566	989
1997	913	798	601	815
1999	925	714	546	773

Hence, although rural areas, according to the BCS, have consistently enjoyed lower incidence of criminal victimisation, using the ONS classification of area type it can be seen that rural areas experienced, relative to their base, higher or more sustained increases in crime over a relatively short period of time. This can be seen more clearly when looking at indexed trends. In the charts on the next page, this data is presented relative to the level in 1983 (the 1983 figure is set to 100).

Despite rural areas experiencing lower incidence of burglary (Table 4.1), it can be seen from Figure 4.4 that relative to their previous levels rural areas have suffered much higher increases than both urban and suburban areas. Indexing also shows more clearly the short sharp rise of burglary in rural areas in 1995.

5. The decrease in incidents of violent crime in rural areas between 1993 and 1995 is significant at the 5% level, using a two-tailed significance test.

Figure 4.4 Incidence of burglary by area type (indexed in 1983 at 100) (BCS)

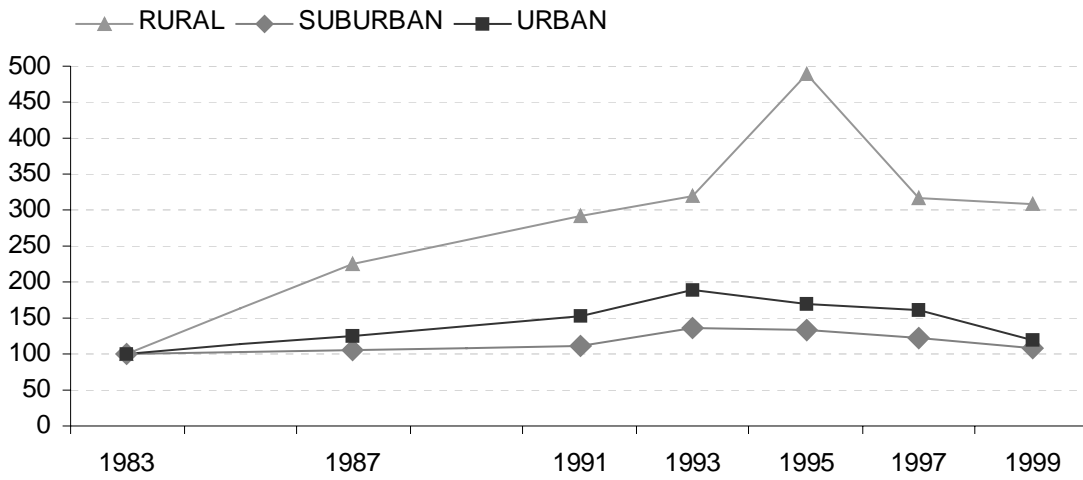


Figure 4.5 Incidence of vehicle-related thefts by area type (indexed in 1983 at 100) (BCS)

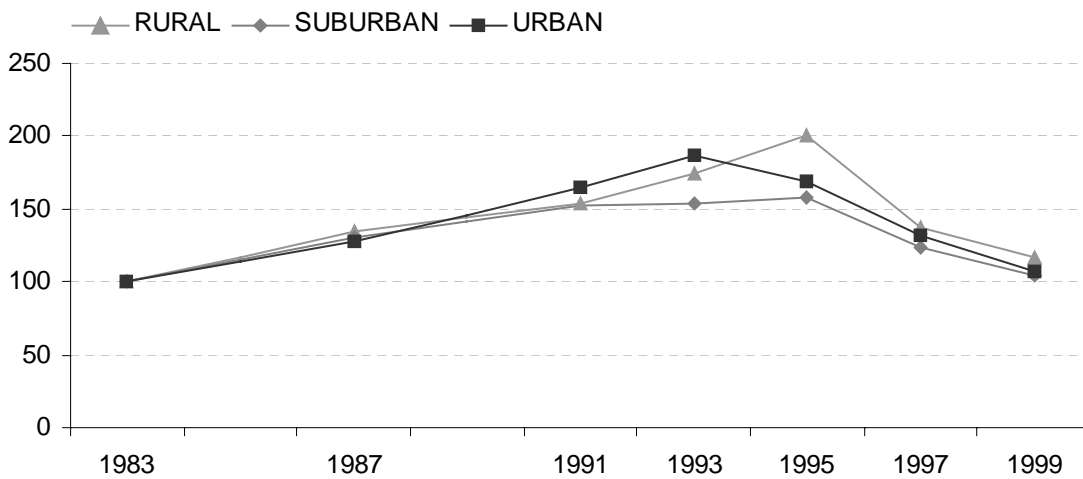
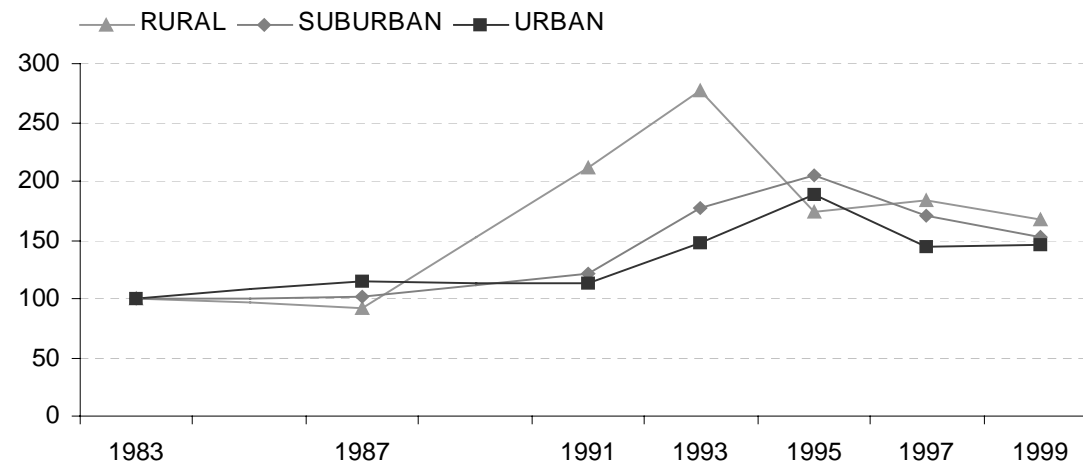


Figure 4.6 Incidence of violent crime by area type (indexed in 1983 at 100) (BCS)



Rural crime in England and Wales

It has been previously shown that rural areas experience lower incidence of vehicle-related crime (Table 4.2). However, Figure 4.5 shows that rural areas have experienced increases in vehicle-related crime not dissimilar from other areas. Indexing the data also shows how the peak seen in rural areas in 1995 was also the highest increase across all areas in incidence of vehicle-related thefts, relative to the early 1980's level.

Table 4.3 showed that the incidence of violence increased in all area types from the late 1980's to the mid 1990's. However, Figure 4.6 shows that over this period rural areas suffered a far larger increase compared to urban and suburban areas, with the rural peak in 1993 being the largest increase in incidence of violence across all areas, relative to the early 1980's.

For both vehicle-related thefts and violent crime these sharp increases were a temporary experience and by 1999, the levels relative to 1983 were similar across all area types. Whilst burglary levels in rural areas have remained higher than levels in the early 1980's, they have also benefited from the same reductions seen nationally over recent years. The risk of being burgled if you live in a rural area still continues to be considerably lower than if you live in urban and even suburban parts of the country.

5. Concern about crime

The term 'concern about crime' encompasses a variety of different attitudes, feelings and reactions towards crime. The British Crime Survey covers concern about crime in a number of ways. These include beliefs about trends in crime and personal risks of victimisation, as well as more emotional responses such as worry about specific offences and feeling unsafe after dark.

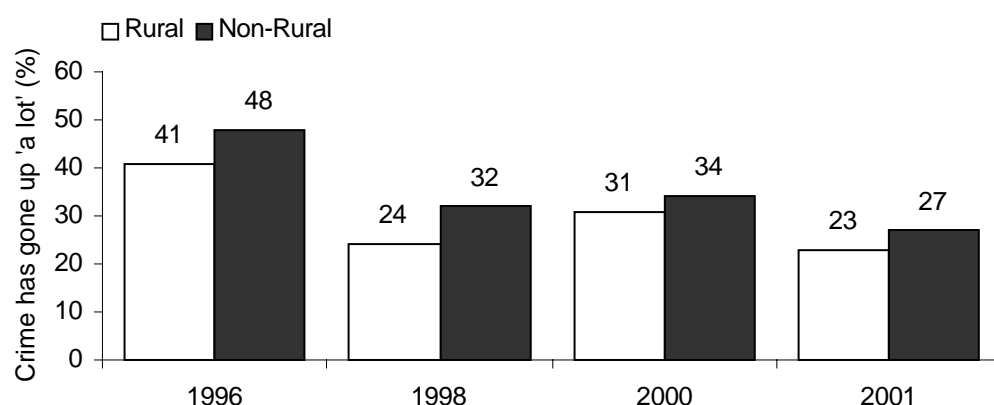
This section looks at the level of public concern in different areas according to the 2001 BCS and examines how this has changed over time. This section concludes by examining the effects of fear of crime, in terms on the impact it has upon an individual's quality of life.

Perceptions of crime

In the 2001 BCS, as in the previous three sweeps, respondents were asked whether they thought the recorded crime rate for the country as a whole had changed over the previous two years. Using the ACORN classification, results from the 2001 BCS indicate that people living in rural areas have the same opinions about crime levels as the rest of the country.

It is estimated that 23 per cent of those living in rural areas felt that the national crime rate had risen 'a lot' over the preceding two years, compared to 27 per cent of those living in non-rural areas.¹ However, the number who reported that they felt crime had risen a little over the same time scale was slightly higher in rural areas compared to non-rural areas (33% and 31% respectively). However, neither of these differences is statistically significant. Since this question was introduced into the BCS in 1996, the percentage of people who thought that the national crime rate has increased 'a lot' over the previous two-years has decreased significantly, and this is true for both rural and non-rural residents.² Analysis also shows how a pattern of increase and decline in beliefs for rural residents mirrors that of non-rural residents (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Percentage believing that the national crime rate had increased 'a lot' (BCS)



People are generally more optimistic about crime in their *own* area. The BCS asks respondents who had lived in the area for more than three years whether they believed the local crime rate

1. Range of responses was 'crime has gone up a lot', 'crime has gone up a little', 'crime is about the same', 'crime has gone down a little' and 'crime has gone down a lot'.

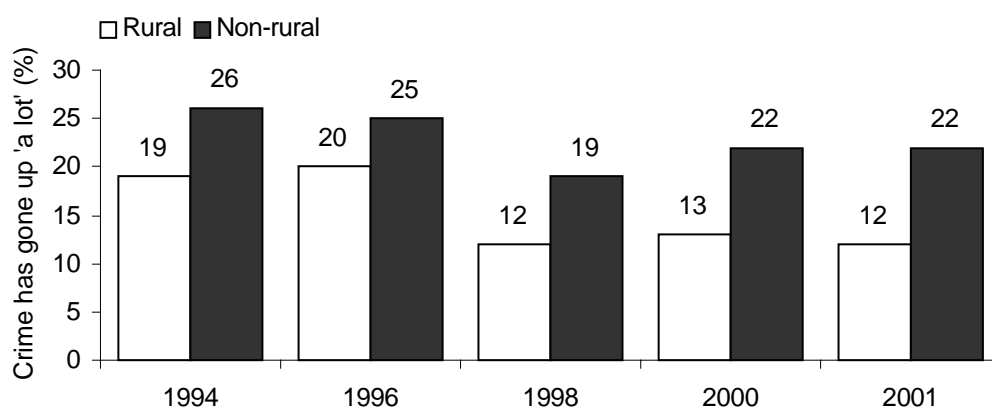
2. Using a two-tailed significance test, the decrease between 1996 and 2001 for both rural and non-rural areas is statistically significant at the 5% level.

Rural crime in England and Wales

had changed relative to two years ago. Results from the 2001 BCS suggest that those who live in rural areas are more positive about crime in their area than those in non-rural areas. This is likely to reflect the fact that rural areas suffer less crime.

The 2001 BCS estimates that 12 per cent of people living in rural areas thought that crime in their local area had risen 'a lot', compared to 22 per cent of those living in non-rural areas.³ There was less difference in the percentage of rural and non-rural residents that thought the local crime rate had risen 'a little' (29% and 31% respectively). Since this question was introduced in 1994, the percentage of people who thought that the local crime rate has increased 'a lot' over the previous two-years has decreased significantly in both rural and non-rural residents (see Figure 5.2).⁴ It can be seen that almost all of the decrease occurred between 1996 and 1998, although as shown crime actually fell nationally in 1995 and has continued to fall over the remainder of the period covered by this report.

Figure 5.2 Beliefs about the change in the local crime rate (BCS)



The likelihood of victimisation

In line with earlier sweeps, the 2001 BCS asked respondents how likely they thought it was that certain crimes would happen to them in the next year.⁵

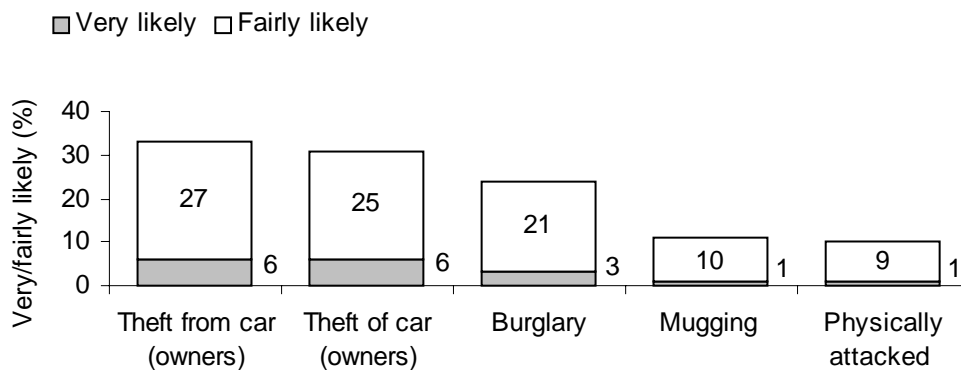
Across the whole of England and Wales, relatively few people thought that these crimes were 'very likely' to happen to them (see Figure 5.3). However, a substantial minority thought that it was 'fairly likely' that their car would be stolen or that items would be stolen from it or that their home would be burgled.

3. Using a two-tailed significance test, the difference between rural and non-rural areas is significant at the 5% level.

4. Using a two-tailed significance test the decrease in both rural and non-rural areas between 1994 and 2001 is statistically significant at the 5% level.

5. Respondents were given a four-point scale – 'very likely', 'fairly likely', 'fairly unlikely' and 'very unlikely'. This scale was also used in the 2000 BCS, however earlier sweeps adopted a five-point scale, including a certain code. This change means that results can only be compared to 2000 estimates.

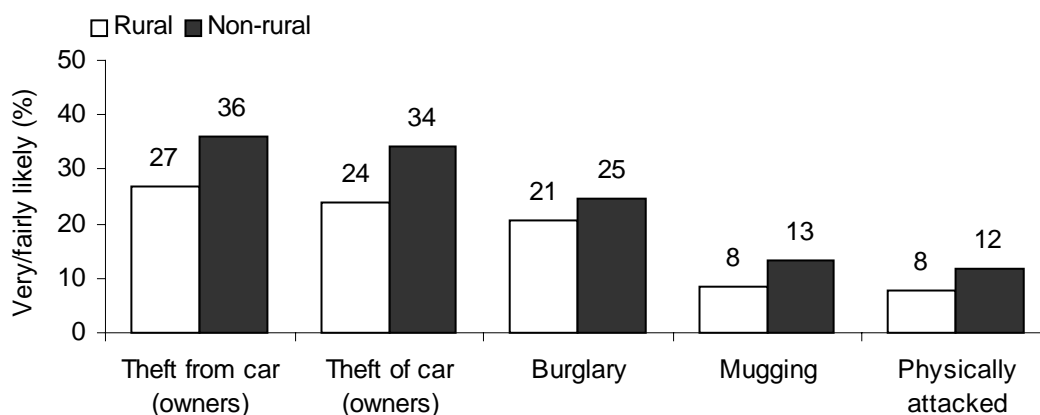
Figure 5.3 Likelihood of criminal victimisation in the following year in England and Wales (2001 BCS)



The type of area in which people live has no influence of the types of crime people feel they are most likely to be a victim of in the following year (see Figure 5.4). However, for all the offences measured, rural residents are more positive about their chances of becoming a victim of crime in the next year.

Rural residents considered themselves significantly less at risk of having items stolen from their car than their non-rural counterparts (27% and 36% respectively). Similarly, 24 per cent of rural residents considered it likely that they would have their car stolen in the following year compared to 34 per cent of non-rural residents, again a significant difference. A smaller percentage of rural residents thought it was likely that they would be a victim of mugging compared to non-rural residents (8% versus 13% respectively). When asked to consider their likelihood of being a victim of an attack by a stranger, 8 per cent of rural residents and 12 per cent of non-rural residents thought themselves likely victims in the following year.⁶ Likelihood of burglary victimisation remained the only offence that was not significantly affected by the area in which a person lived.

Figure 5.4 Likelihood of victimisation in the following year by area type (2001 BCS)



6. Using a two-tailed significance test, the difference between rural and non-rural areas in likelihood of victimisation for items stolen from car, theft of car, mugging and stranger violence are all statistically significant at the 5% level.

Rural crime in England and Wales

Looking at the tighter measure of those who consider themselves 'very likely' to experience criminal victimisation in the year to come, there remain significant differences between rural and non-rural areas for the offences of theft from a car and theft of a car.

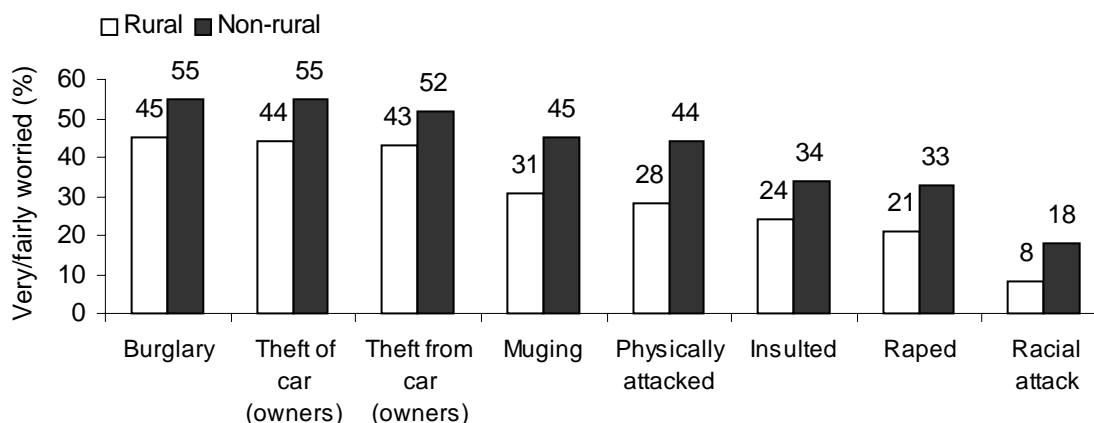
The BCS shows that perceptions are to some degree associated with actual levels of risk. Rural areas have consistently reported lower estimates of future criminal victimisation than non-rural areas. This appears rational given that for the three major crime types residents of rural areas are less likely to experience crime.

The BCS also identifies many other factors that appear to be linked to perceptions of risk, many of which are also more concentrated in urban areas. For example, people living in inner-cities, council estates, social rented accommodation, or areas with high levels of social disorder are more likely to report that they believe they will be victimised in the next year.⁷

Worry about victimisation

Whilst the area in which people live has little influence on the types of crime that people worry about falling victim to, it does alter the degree to which they are worried (see Figures 5.5). People were most concerned about becoming a victim of property crime and this is rational given that property crime is more prevalent than crimes against the person. However, people living in non-rural areas are significantly more worried about all types of crime compared to those living in rural areas (see Figure 5.5).⁸

Figure 5.5 Worry about crime by area type (2001 BCS)



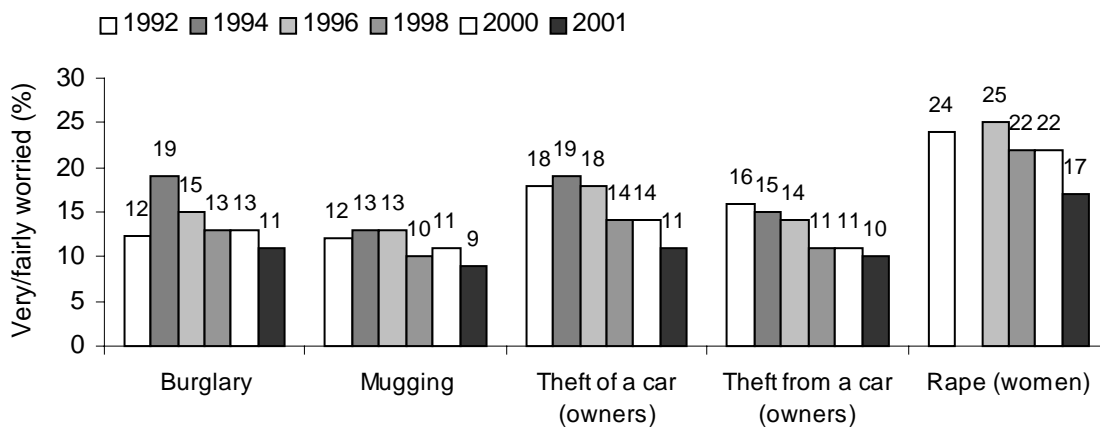
Nationally, levels of worry were highest in 1994 and this is also true for rural areas. Since reaching a peak in 1994 worry about crime in rural areas has continued on a steady decline. The same pattern can be seen in non-rural areas.⁹

7. See Home Office Statistical Bulletin 18/01 for more information on risk factors associated with criminal victimisation.

8. Using a two-tailed significance test, the difference between rural and non-rural residents in the proportion that was 'very and fairly' worried for all the crimes listed are all statistically significant at the 5% level.

9. Prior to 1998, only women were asked the worry about rape question. To provide trend data, successive sweeps have been restricted to only women. Worry about rape was not asked in 1994.

Figure 5.6 Trend in worry about crime in rural areas (BCS)



Concerns about safety

Apart from asking people how worried they are about different crimes, the BCS also asks people how safe they feel when (a) walking alone in their area after dark and (b) alone in their home at night. There could be many reasons why people feel unsafe in such circumstances, for example fear of the dark or fear of a fall etc. Furthermore, for some people the question may be hypothetical as they are never or infrequently in these situations.

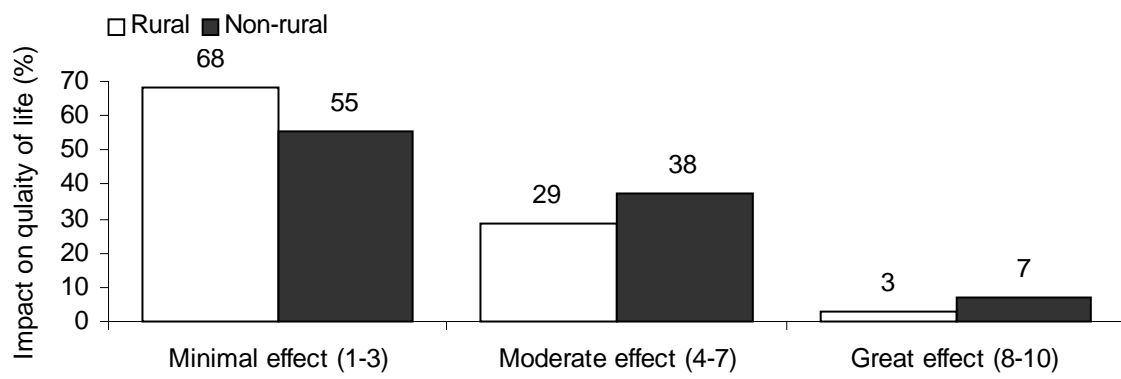
In 2001, 13 per cent of all respondents said that they felt 'very unsafe' walking alone in their area after dark and a further 20 per cent felt 'a bit unsafe'. Fifteen per cent of non-rural residents compared to 8 per cent of rural residents reported that in this situation they feel 'very unsafe'. Fifteen per cent of rural residents and 22 per cent of non-rural residents claimed that when walking alone in their area after dark they feel 'a bit unsafe'.

People are less likely to feel unsafe in their own home, with only 2 per cent of all respondent saying that they felt 'very unsafe' and 6 per cent feeling 'a bit unsafe'. Rural residents feel safer than those living in non-rural areas. One per cent of rural residents and 2 per cent of non-rural residents reported that in this situation they feel 'very unsafe'. Five per cent of rural residents and 7 per cent of non-rural residents claimed that when alone in their home at night they feel 'a bit unsafe', again this difference is statistically significant.

Fear of crime is also less likely to have an impact on people's quality of life in a rural area. Sixty-eight percent of rural residents stated that fear of crime had minimal impact on their lives, compared to fifty five percent in non-rural areas.¹⁰

10. Using a two-tailed significance test, the lower proportion of rural residents compared to non-rural residents that reported that they felt both 'very unsafe' and 'a bit unsafe' both walking alone in their area after dark and alone in their home at night is statistically significant at the 5% level. The impact that the area in which you live has on the varying degrees to which fear of crime affects your quality of life are all significant at the 5% level. Using a two-tailed significance test.

Figure 5.7 Degree to which fear of crime impacts on quality of life by area type (2001 BCS)



6. Neighbourhood disorder

Reducing antisocial behaviour and disorder is a key part of the Government's Crime Reduction Strategy. However, defining and measuring antisocial behaviour and disorder is inherently difficult as expectations of standards of behaviour vary both between and within communities.

The BCS asks respondents about their perceptions of various forms of social and physical disorder in their local area (defined as within a 15-minute walk from their home). The BCS has asked about perceptions of disorder since 1984. From the 1992 sweeps, up to and including the 1998 survey respondents were asked how much of a *problem* they considered the various problems were in their area. The 2000 sweep continued to ask a random half these same questions, however, the remaining half were also asked how *common* they were.¹ The two varying questions are asked because a particular disorder, such as litter, may be relatively common in an area but not considered a problem, or vice versa.

The BCS asks respondents whether they feel their neighbourhood is one in which people do things together and try to help each other or one in which people mostly go their own way. Estimates from the 2000 BCS show that the rural residents are significantly more likely to report that they feel their neighbourhood is one in which people help each other, compared to non-rural residents (48% and 32% respectively). This is a significant increase in both areas on the 1992 estimates (See Table 6.1).²

Table 6.1 Type of neighbourhood by area type (BCS)

<i>Percentages</i>	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
NON-RURAL AREAS					
People help each other	28	27	25	29	32
People go their own way	53	54	54	52	52
Not-specified	19	19	21	19	15
RURAL AREAS					
People help each other	41	41	38	40	48
People go their own way	37	40	39	39	36
Not-specified	22	19	23	21	16

The 2000 BCS also asked respondents that when taking everything into account what is their area like as a place to live. Rural residents were also significantly more likely to view their area as a 'good' or 'very good' place to live, compared to non-rural residents (96% and 83% respectively).³

1. The 1984 and 1988 sweeps also (and only) asked respondents how common various disorders were.

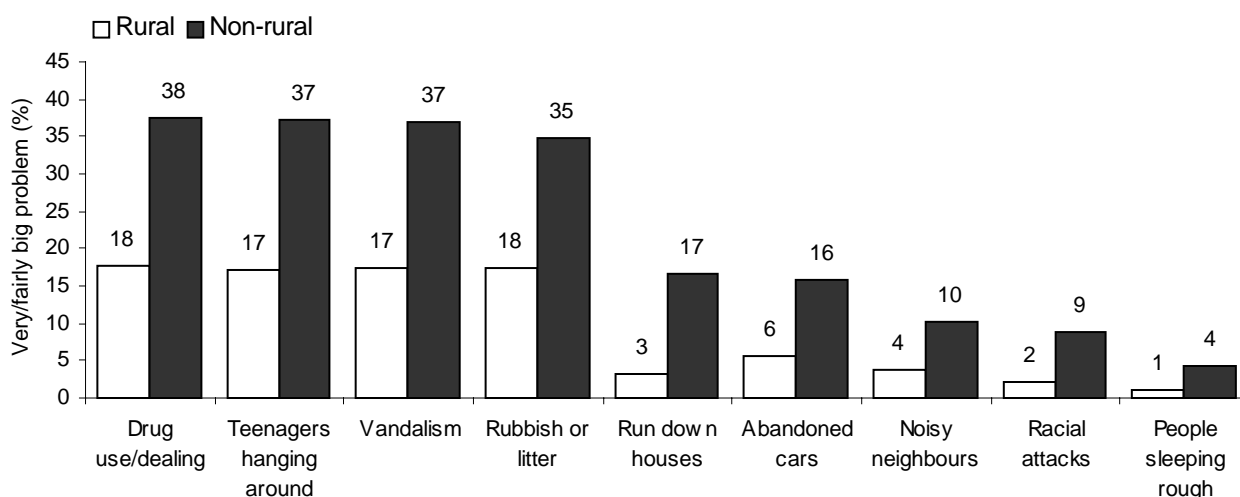
2. Using a two-tailed significance test, both the differences between rural and non-rural residents in 2000 and the change between 1992 and 2000 in both area types is significant at the 5% level.

3. Using a two-tailed significance test, this difference is significant at the 5% level.

Levels of disorder

Rural residents are significantly less likely to report that social and physical disorders are a ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ big problem in their local area, compared to non-rural residents.⁴ This pattern has been consistent across all sweeps of the BCS.

Figure 6.1 How much of a problem social and physical disorder is in your area by area type (2000 BCS)



Both rural and non-rural residents report the same disorders as the biggest problems in their area: drug use or dealing, teenagers hanging around, vandalism and rubbish or litter. All of these disorders were scored as roughly the same within each area, although at significantly lower rates in rural areas, and all were markedly higher than any other measured disorder (Figure 6.1).

Comparing estimates from the 1992 sweep with those obtained in the 2000, increases occurred for all measured disorders in both area types, albeit there was some variation in intervening years (Table 6.2). Only the increase in rubbish in both area types fails to be statistically significant.⁵ However, it must be remembered that these are perceptions and may not necessarily match reality. The increases measured may not imply real increases in the problems.

4. Using a two-tailed significance test, these differences between rural and non-rural residents are all significant at the 5% level.

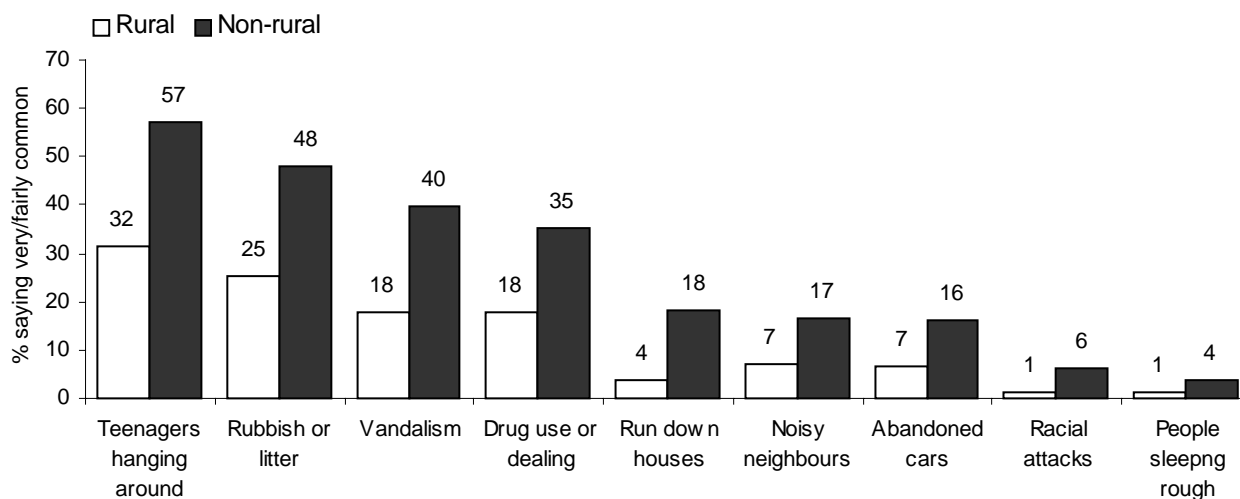
5. Using a two-tailed significance test, the increase in noisy neighbours in non-rural areas was significant at the 10% level. All other increases were significant at the 5% level.

Table 6.2 Trends in disorder perceived to be a very/fairly big problem in area (BCS)

Percentages	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
NON-RURAL AREAS					
Drug use/dealing	17	25	24	28	38
Vandalism/graffiti	29	33	28	30	37
Teenagers hanging around	24	30	27	31	37
Rubbish or litter	34	31	30	32	35
Noisy neighbours	9	9	9	10	10
Racial attacks	3	6	5	6	9
RURAL AREAS					
Drugs use/dealing	7	12	11	14	18
Vandalism/graffiti	15	15	13	14	17
Teenagers hanging around	10	13	12	15	17
Rubbish or litter	17	13	13	15	18
Noisy neighbours	4	3	4	4	4
Racial attacks	1	1	1	1	2

Rural residents are also significantly less likely to report that disorder is very/fairly common in their area compared to non-rural residents (Figure 6.2).⁶ The four disorders that were the biggest problem for respondents in their area, was the same as those considered as the most common (teenagers hanging around, rubbish, vandalism and drug use).

Figure 6.2 How common social and physical disorder is by area type (2000 BCS)



6. Using a two-tailed significance test, these differences are all significant at the 5% level.

The most common disorder for both rural and non-rural residents was teenagers hanging around, mentioned by 45 per cent of non-rural residents and 38 per cent of rural residents. The next most common problem identified was rubbish, mentioned by 26 per cent of non-rural residents and 33 per cent of rural residents. However, rubbish was reported by rural residents as the disorder that has the most impact on their quality of life (32%), followed closely by teenagers hanging around (30%). This was similar, albeit reversed, for non-rural residents, with teenagers hanging around being the disorder which has the greatest impact on their quality of life (44%), with rubbish mentioned second (33%).

7. Police response in rural areas

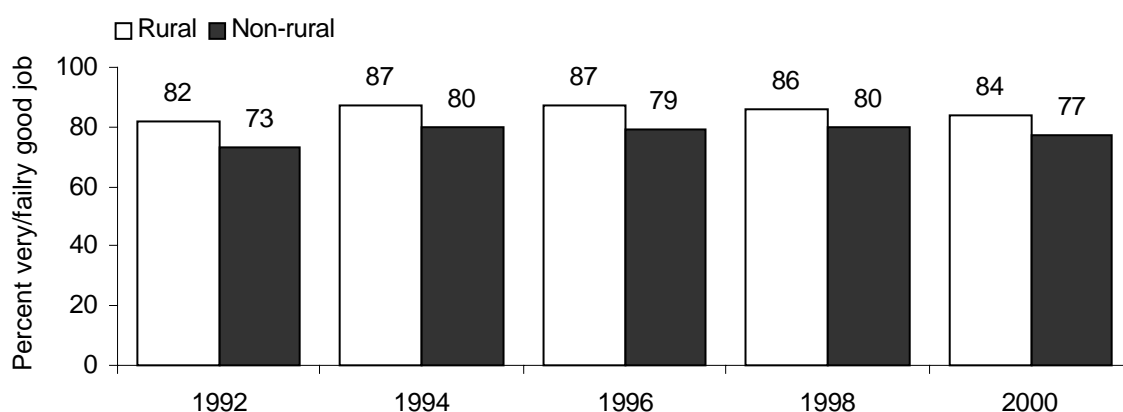
This section looks at perceptions of the police and how this varies according to the area in which you live. This is examined for both victims and non-victims of crime, and changes over time.

Perceptions of the police

Satisfaction with the police is high amongst the general public. However, across successive sweeps of the survey, it can be seen that rural areas have consistently rated their local police as doing a better job than their urban counterparts (Figure 7.1).

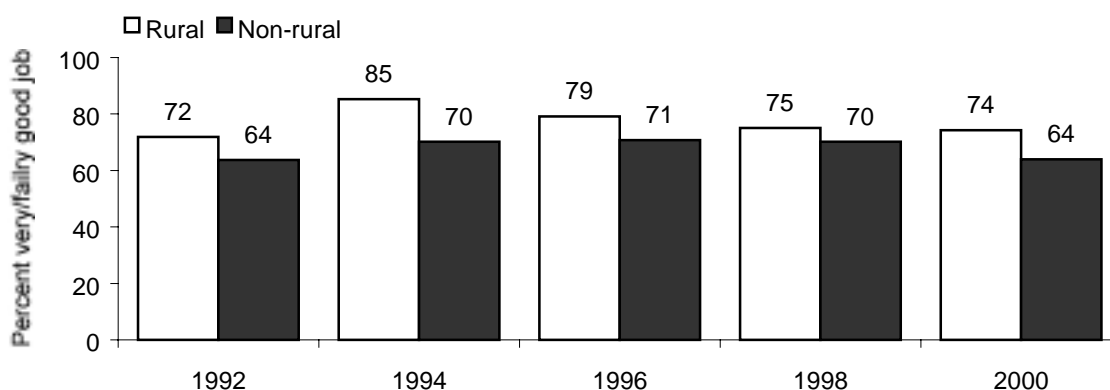
Estimates from the 2000 BCS show that rural residents are significantly more likely to consider the police in their area do a 'very' or 'fairly' good job, compared to non-rural residents (84% and 77% respectively).¹ Only 5 per cent of rural residents and 7 per cent of non-rural residents considered the police in their area do a 'very' poor job.

Figure 7.1 Rating of local police by area type (BCS)



Amongst victims of crime, rural victims were significantly more likely to state that they felt the local police did a 'very' or 'fairly' good job compared to non-rural residents (74% and 64% respectively).² However, a slightly higher proportion of rural victims considered the police in their area did a 'very poor' job (14% compared to 9% in non-rural areas).

Figure 7.2 Victims of crime rating of their local police by area type (BCS)



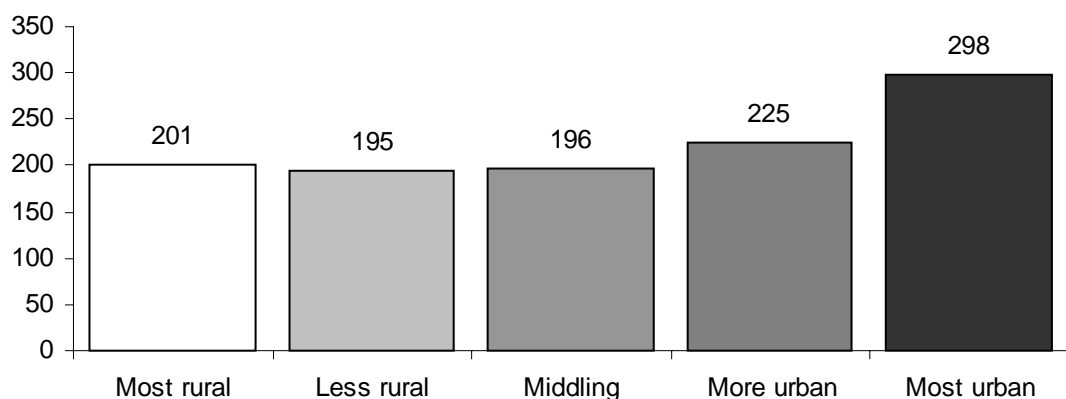
1. On a scale of 'very good', 'fairly good', 'fairly poor' or 'very poor'. Using a two-tailed significance test, this difference is statistically significant that the 5% level.

2. Using a two-tailed significance test, this difference is statistically significant that the 5% level.

Numbers of police officers

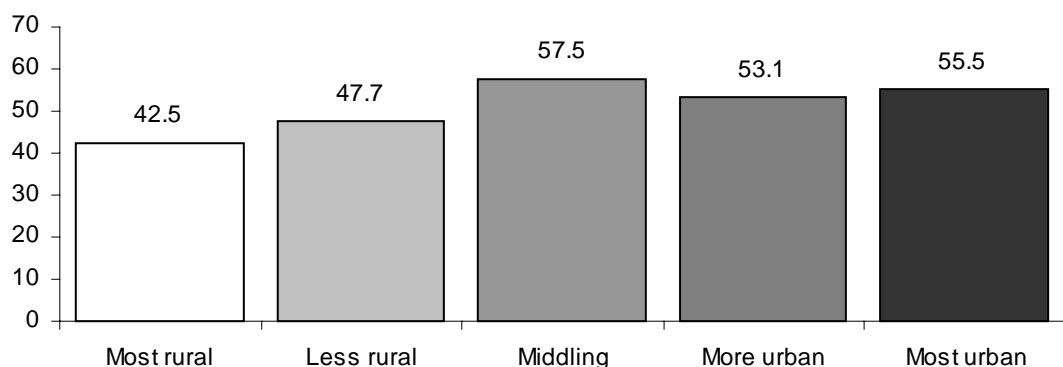
Concerns over the number of police officers in rural areas have become common in recent years. When looking at the number of police officers available to rural areas we can see that these concerns are unsurprising. In the more rural police forces, the number of officers per 100,000 population are substantially lower than the numbers in the most urban police force areas. However, as Figure 7.3 shows, the numbers in the four most rural forces are no lower than in the less rural and middling forces.

Figure 7.3 Average number of officers per 100,000 population by area type (2001)



On their own, however, the numbers of police officers are not always very informative. The level of policing required by a particular local area will be affected by a range of factors. One obvious consideration is the level of crime in a particular area. Looking at the number of crimes per officer in the same groupings of forces (Figure 7.4) we can see that despite the lower numbers of officers per population, officers in the most rural police forces are faced with fewer recorded crimes on average than those officers in less rural areas. In particular, the numbers of crimes per officer was highest in the middling forces – where the per-population officer numbers were on a par with the most rural forces but where levels of crime are substantially higher. This may partly explain why the police in rural areas continue to be more highly regarded than in non-rural areas.

Figure 7.4 Ratio of recorded crime to number of police officers (2001)



Appendix A Additional tables

Table A3.1 Victims of crime once or more in 1999 by area type (2000 BCS)

	Rural	Non-rural	Significance
Broad classification of area type			
Burglary	2.6	4.8	*
Vehicle-related thefts	9.0	14.0	*
Violence	2.6	4.7	*
Narrow classification of area type			
Burglary	1.7	4.5	*
Vehicle-related thefts	8.3	13.0	*
Violence	1.8	4.4	*

Notes:

1. * Significant at the 5% level. Using a two-tailed significance test.
2. Burglary is per 10,000 households, vehicle-related thefts per 10,000 vehicle-owning households and violence per 10,000 adults.
3. Area type is based on ACORN. See Appendix B for more details.
4. 2000 BCS (Weighted data). Covers England and Wales.

Table A3.2 Number of incidents of crime per 10,000 population by area type (2000 BCS)

	Rural	Non-rural	Significance
Broad classification of area type			
Burglary	343	662	*
Vehicle-related thefts	1207	1947	*
Violence	462	876	*
Narrow classification of area type			
Burglary	219	614	*
Vehicle-related thefts	1038	1808	*
Violence	356	807	*

Notes:

1. * Significant at the 5% level. Using a two-tailed significance test.
2. Burglary is per 10,000 households, vehicle-related thefts per 10,000 vehicle-owning households and violence per 10,000 adults.
3. Area type is based on ACORN. See Appendix B for more details.
4. 2000 BCS (Weighted data). Covers England and Wales.

Appendix B Rural areas

ACORN classification

ACORN – ('A Classification Of Residential Neighbourhoods') classifies households according to the demographic, employment and housing characteristics of the surrounding neighbourhood. ACORN was developed by CACI Ltd., through the use of cluster analysis of variables from the 1991 Census. ACORN is most useful in determining the social environment in which households are located.¹ There are a total of 54 ACORN types.² This report has used two ways of defining rural areas based on ACORN. The broader classification defines 10 of the 54 ACORN types as rural and the tighter classification is based on 3.

Broad classification

Wealthy suburbs, large detached houses
 Villages with wealthy commuters
 Mature affluent home owning area
 Affluent suburbs, older families
 Mature, well-off suburbs
 Agricultural villages, home based workers
 Holiday retreats, older people, home based workers
 Private flats, elderly people
 Rural areas, mixed occupations

Narrow classification

Villages with wealthy commuters
 Agricultural villages, home based workers
 Rural areas, mixed occupations

Police Force Areas

Of the 43 PFA's, 4 are classified as 'most rural', 9 as 'less rural', 14 as 'middling', 11 as 'more urban' and 5 as 'most urban'.

Most Rural	Less rural	Middling	More urban	Most urban
Dyfed-Powys	Cambridgeshire	Avon and Somerset	Cheshire	Greater Manchester
Lincolnshire	Cumbria	Bedfordshire	Cleveland	City of London
North Yorkshire	Devon and Cornwall	Derbyshire	Hertfordshire	Metropolitan Police
North Wales	Durham	Dorset	Lancashire	Merseyside
	Gloucestershire	Essex	Northumbria	West Midlands
	Norfolk	Gwent	Nottinghamshire	
	Suffolk	Hampshire	South Wales	
	West Mercia	Humberside	South Yorkshire	
	Wiltshire	Kent	Staffordshire	
		Leicestershire	Surrey	
		Northamptonshire	West Yorkshire	
		Sussex		
		Thames Valley		
		Warwickshire		

1. Further information about ACORN is available from CACI Ltd., CACI House, Kensington Village, Avonmore Road, London W14 8TS.

2. For a list of all the ACORN types see Hales et al (2000).

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships

Of the 376 CDRP's 4 fall into the density group 1, 55 in density group 2, 75 in density group 3, 75 in density group 4, 52 in density group 5 and 115 in density group 6. Density groups 1 and 2 are considered rural.³

Density group 1

Isle of Scilly	North Norfolk
Ryedale	West Devon

Density group 2

Alnwick	Babergh
Berwick-upon-Tweed	Breckland
Carmarthenshire	Ceredigion
Chichester	Cotswold
Craven	Daventry
Derbyshire Dales	East Cambridgeshire
East Lindsey	Eden
Forest of Dean	Gwynedd
Hambleton	Harborough
Isle of Anglesey	Kennet
King's Lynn & West Norfolk	Malvern Hills
Mid Devon	Mid Suffolk
North Cornwall	North Dorset
North Kesteven	North Shropshire
Oswestry	Pembrokeshire
Powys	Purbeck
Richmondshire	Rutland
Selby	South Bucks
South Cambridgeshire	South Hams
South Holland	South Lakeland
South Norfolk	South Northamptonshire
South Shropshire	Stratford-upon Avon
Suffolk Coastal	Tandridge
Teesdale	Torfaen
Torridge	Tunbridge Wells
Tynedale	West Dorset
West Lindsey	West Somerset
Wychavon	

ONS classification

The ONS classification of areas is also derived from the using multi-level analysis of variables from the 1991 Census. Areas are classified into rural, suburban and urban. The rural category refers to 20% of the population, suburban to 35% and urban to 45%.

Rural	Suburban	Urban
Rural areas	Maturer areas Prospering areas	Inner London Mining and industrial areas Urban centres

3. For a full list of all the CDRP's see Home Office Statistical Bulletin 13/01.

References

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**RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND STATISTICS DIRECTORATE
MISSION STATEMENT**

RDS is part of the Home Office. The Home Office's purpose is to build a safe, just and tolerant society in which the rights and responsibilities of individuals, families and communities are properly balanced and the protection and security of the public are maintained.

RDS is also a part of the Government Statistical Service (GSS). One of the GSS aims is to inform Parliament and the citizen about the state of the nation and provide a window on the work and performance of government, allowing the impact of government policies and actions to be assessed.

Therefore -

Research, Development and Statistics Directorate exists to improve policy making, decision taking and practice in support of the Home Office purpose and aims, to provide the public and Parliament with information necessary for informed debate and to publish information for future use.
