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Rural economies boosted by new migration trends

Researchers at Northumbria University, Newcastle, are studying how shifting work patterns and home-buying preferences are changing rural communities – and creating new business opportunities.

[Dr Gary Bosworth](#) and [Dr Robert Newbery](#), *Professors of Entrepreneurship at Northumbria's Newcastle Business School* are working with partners at the University of East Anglia and the University of Lincoln as well as property consultants [Watsons](#) and [George F. White](#), to explore how changing migration choices are shaping today's rural communities. Analysis of data from the past

decade shows that rural areas which attract new residents in their 20s and 30s also see more business start-ups. This suggests that a recent growth in demand for rural living and new ways of working in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic could launch a new wave of rural businesses

Dr Bosworth says the research will seek to understand what makes different rural places attractive and how we make housing choices from the information available to us. He explains: “So called ‘counterurbanisation’, the movement of people from cities to rural areas, has been part of the UK housing market since the middle of the last century. In other countries, the lure of rural living has ebbed and flowed but here in the UK it has been a continuing trend. The countryside holds a particular place in British culture. We cherish the timeless landscapes, natural beauty and traditional virtues of rural community life, so we are now asking if this romantic vision of the countryside can also offer a dynamic location for new businesses.”

The attractiveness of living in the country has created more commuting, increased rural house-building and pushed up property prices in many of the more accessible and picturesque rural areas, but the impact of population growth in these areas has been mixed. Rural Britain today has some of the wealthiest and some of the poorest people.

Dr Bosworth adds: “We have well-connected, well-served communities with diverse business populations, but also Internet “not-spots”, pockets of hidden deprivation and villages and towns that are losing their business centres. Understanding the needs of rural communities and their businesses is a key priority as the nation emerges from the worst impacts of Covid-19.”

Dr Bosworth and the team are now asking those who are thinking of moving house, or have moved within the last year, if they can assist in the research by completing this [Moving to the Country Survey](#) designed to help what people really want from a new home. It should take about 10 minutes to complete.

Participants can respond anonymously to the survey and the project is being run independently by Professor Gary Bosworth at the University of Northumbria.

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