Coos County (OR)

Mindy Crandall
Jessica Leahy
Nicole Bernsen
Jesse Abrams
Autumn Ellison

See next page for additional authors

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Authors
Mindy Crandall, Jessica Leahy, Nicole Bernsen, Jesse Abrams, Autumn Ellison, Alexa Carleton, and Liz Capodilupo
RURAL YOUTH FUTURES: COOS COUNTY, OREGON

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: Coos County in Oregon and Piscataquis/Northern Somerset Counties in Maine. 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 school principals, students at 7 schools in Coos County were given a link to an anonymous, electronic survey between January and May in 2019. Participation was voluntary. The schools had a combined 2,902 students enrolled during 2018–2019, 1,332 of which took the survey for a participation rate of 46%. 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:

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:

Category that best describes you:

Perception of family finances:

School changes from moving in past 5 years:

Born in Coos County:

More than enough for food & bills (27%)

Enough for food & bills (37%)

Not enough for food & bills (14%)

Don't know/choose not to respond (28%)

Asian (1%)

Black/African American (2%)

Latino/Hispanic (9%)

Native American (6%)

White/Caucasian (66%)

Two or more races/ethnicities (15%)

Female (51%)

Male (44%)

Non-Binary (2%)

None of these (1%)

Trans (1%)

Choose not to respond (2%)

2-parent, biological parents

2-parent, step family

Single parent, mom

Single parent, dad

Live with grandparents

Live with foster family (1%)

Live with friend’s family (1%)

Couch surf or “other”

2-parent, biological parents

2-parent, step family

Single parent, mom

Single parent, dad

Did not finish high school

Finished high school

Went to school, don’t know how far

Graduated from college or more

Went to college, didn’t graduate

Don’t know or N/A

Yes, one full-time job

Not working now, but looking for a job

Yes, one part-time job

Does not have a job

Yes, multiple jobs

Retired

Don’t know or N/A
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 Coos 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: 41%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 26%
  - Disagree: 31%
  - Don't know: 2%

- I get bullied by others at school:
  - Agree: 13%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 22%
  - Disagree: 62%
  - Don't know: 4%

- I am usually bored at school:
  - Agree: 58%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 25%
  - Disagree: 15%
  - Don't know: 2%

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>a) Want</th>
<th>b) Expect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-year community college/trade school</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year college/university</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate, master's, or law program</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D. program or medical school</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

1. It costs too much (46%)
2. I don't have good enough grades (25%)
3. I need to work after school (22%)
4. I'm not smart enough (21%)
5. I'd need to move away to go to school (13%)

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

- Sports team (51%)
- Community service or volunteering (32%)
- Attend community events (31%)
- Art or dance (23%)
- After-school or summer program (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</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>24%</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: 53%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 28%
  - Disagree: 16%
  - Don’t know: 3%

- **I care about my community:**
  - Agree: 71%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 19%
  - Disagree: 8%
  - Don’t know: 2%

- **I feel like I am part of my community:**
  - Agree: 48%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 30%
  - Disagree: 18%
  - Don’t know: 3%

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

**TOP 5 WISHES**

- More shops and retail stores (64%)
- More indoor recreation (60%)
- More restaurants (58%)
- More outdoor recreation (47%)
- More arts and culture (46%)

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

- More jobs & improving economy: 21%
- Same # of jobs & same economy: 28%
- Fewer jobs & declining economy: 22%
- Don’t know: 30%

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

- **Want**
  - Same or nearby town as now: 21%
  - Other rural area in Oregon: 12%
  - City in Oregon: 13%
  - Rural area in another state: 9%
  - City in another state: 24%
  - Another country: 23%

- **Expect**
  - Same or nearby town as now: 28%
  - Somewhere else rural (not in a city): 7%
  - City in Oregon: 27%
  - Rural area in another state: 11%
  - City in another state: 28%
  - Another country: 5%

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Respondents that selected “yes”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drug or alcohol abuse</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough things to do in town</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People not having enough money</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough jobs</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough affordable or good housing</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of public transportation</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor school quality</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People moving away</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough outdoor activities</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough healthcare or doctors</td>
<td>33%</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.

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

TOP 5 TRAINING NEEDS

- Training in hands-on skills (48%)
- Education or college advice (44%)
- Job advice (40%)
- Help with job applications (35%)
- Interviewing skills (30%)

TOP 5 BARRIERS

- I don’t have enough money to get the education I need (30%)
- I don’t know the right people (24%)
- I don’t have enough good grades in school (16%)
- There aren’t enough jobs in that field (14%)
- I don’t have the necessary skills (14%)

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

- Visiting the beach: 60%
- Camping: 57%
- Hiking: 51%
- Fishing: 37%
- Wildlife viewing: 33%
- ATV riding: 32%
- Canoeing or kayaking: 29%
- Clamming/crabbing: 26%
- Hunting: 25%
- Golfing or frisbee/disc golf: 18%

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

Would you want to work in one of the following industries in Coos County?

- Education: 29% Yes, 55% No, 16% Don’t know
- Industrial: 27% Yes, 58% No, 13% Don’t know
- Medical: 45% Yes, 40% No, 15% Don’t know
- Outdoors-based: 35% Yes, 51% No, 14% Don’t know
- Service: 23% Yes, 56% No, 18% Don’t know

YOUTH PROGRAMMING

The Rural Youth Futures project is funded by USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture grant #2017-67023-26240. Project partners include: University of Maine, the University of Oregon’s Ecosystem Workforce Program, Coos Watershed Association (Oregon), the Appalachian Mountain Club (Maine), and Oregon State University. Header photo: public domain, USDA Forest Service, PNW Region.

For more information on the project, contact Mindy Crandall, Oregon State University, mindy.crandall@oregonstate.edu.